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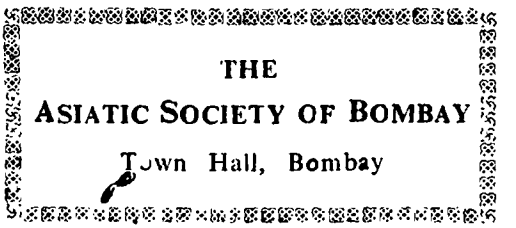

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A

SHORT AND EASY METHOD

WITH THE

DEISTS;

WHEREIN THE CERTAINTY OF THE

CHRISTIAN RELIGION

Is DEMONSTRATED *by* INFALLIBLE PROOF, *from* FOUR RULES, *which are incompatible to any* IMPOSTURE *that ever yet has been, or can possibly be.*

IN A LETTER TO A FRIEND.

BY THE LATE

REV. CHARLES LESLIE, M.A.

WITH A LETTER FROM THE AUTHOR TO A DEIST, UPON HIS CONVERSION BY READING HIS BOOK.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

67993

A PREFACE

BY THE REV. W. JONES, M.A.

AUTHOR OF THE CATHOLIC DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY, &c.

A 25

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A PREFACE

TO

MR. LESLIE'S

SHORT METHOD WITH THE DEISTS.

MANY attempts having lately been made upon the people of England, to ſeduce them from the Chriſtian Faith, and to lead them into deſtruction, temporal and eternal; ſomething ſhould be done to ſecure them againſt profligate writers, the declared apoſtles of atheiſm. I therefore rejoice to find, that the Society for promoting Chriſtian Knowledge, have reſolved to print and diſperſe Mr. LESLIE's Short Method with the Deiſts, *together with its ſequel, entitled,* The Truth of Chriſtianity demonſtrated. *The world affords nothing ſo effectual on the Chriſtian evidences; and I pray God to give his bleſſing to their pious endeavours, by opening the hearts of thoſe who are in error to receive the light of truth: and it is here ſo repreſented to them, that they will receive it, unleſs a ſpirit of infatuation is gone forth amongſt them; which, may God Almighty avert!*

In the former of theſe Tracts, the argument is ſo ſhort and clear, that the meaneſt capacity may underſtand it; and ſo forcible, that no man has yet been found able to reſiſt it. When it was firſt publiſhed, ſome attempts were made; but they ſoon came to nothing. The argument in brief is this. The Chriſtian Religion conſiſts of facts and doctrines, each depending on the other; ſo that if the facts are true, the doctrines, muſt be true. Thus, for example; the reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt is a fact: our reſurrection is a doctrine. Admit the fact; and the doctrine cannot be denied. The aſcenſion of Jeſus Chriſt is another fact: his return from thence to judge the world is a doctrine: if the fact be true, the doctrine muſt be ſo likewiſe. For, argues the apoſtle, if the doctrine be not true, the fact muſt be falſe; if the dead riſe not, then is not Chriſt raiſed.

The truth of a matter of fact may be certainly known, if it be attended with certain marks, ſuch as no falſe fact can poſſibly have. Theſe marks are four. It is required, firſt, that the fact be a ſenſible fact, ſuch as men's outward ſenſes can judge of; ſecondly, that it be notorious, performed publickly in the preſence of witneſſes; thirdly, that there be memorials of it, or monuments and actions kept up in memory of it; fourthly, that ſuch monuments and actions begin with the fact. It is the deſign of Mr. Leſlie's book to ſhew, how theſe four marks

marks do all meet in the facts of Chriſtianity. And to the four marks, which any true fact may have, he has added four more, in his ſecond tract, which are peculiar to the facts of Chriſtianity.

Every reader, to whom the Short Method is new, will be induced to think more highly of it, if I tell him its hiſtory; as I received it from Doctor Delany, Dean of Down, in Ireland; who told me he had it from Captain Leſlie, a ſon of the Author. It was the fortune of Mr. Leſlie to be acquainted with the Duke of Leeds of that time; who obſerved to him, that although he was a believer of the Chriſtian Religion, he was not ſatisfied with the common methods of proving it: that the argument was long and complicated; ſo that ſome had neither leiſure nor patience to follow it, and others were not able to comprehend it: that as it was the nature of all truth to be plain and ſimple; if Chriſtianity were a truth, there muſt be ſome ſhort way of ſhewing it to be ſo; and he wiſhed Mr. Leſlie would think of it. Such a hint to ſuch a man, in the ſpace of three days, produced a rough draught of the Short and Eaſy Method with the Deiſts; which he preſented to the Duke; who looked it over, and then ſaid, "I thought I was a Chriſtian "before, but I am ſure of it now: and as I am "indebted to you for converting me, I ſhall hence-"forth look upon you as my ſpiritual father." And he acted accordingly; for he never came into

his company afterwards without aſking his bleſſing. Such is the ſtory: very nearly as Dr. Delany himſelf would tell it, if he were now alive. The circumſtances are ſo memorable, that there muſt have been ſomething very extraordinary at the bottom to account for them. And ſo thought Dr. Middleton: though the work affected him in a very different manner. Feeling how neceſſary it was to his principles, that he ſhould ſome way rid himſelf of Mr. Leſlie's argument, he looked out for ſome falſe fact, to which the four marks might be applied: and this he did for twenty years together, without being able to find one. This I learned from the late Dr. Berkeley, ſon to the celebrated Biſhop of Cloyne; who converſed much with the world, and I believe would not have reported ſuch a thing, but upon good authority. I may mention another event, which ought not to be forgotten, upon this occaſion. An anecdote it is not; becauſe it muſt be already known to the public. Dr. Prieſtley, that unaccountable man, like the Quaker, who went over to Conſtantinople to convert the Grand Seignior, wrote and printed a letter to the infidels of France, with a view of bringing them back to Chriſtianity: in which letter he gives them Mr. Leſlie's argument, as if it had been his own; for he ſays not a word of the author. The world looks upon the doctor as one of the falſe apoſtles of the age: but if he had been a true apoſtle, and could work miracles, what

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reaſon have we to think that they would have more effect upon the French, than miracles had upon the Jews? This world is the god of the French, as it was of the Jews; and its power to blind the eyes is as great now as it was then. Beſides, the argument had been publiſhed in France long before the time of Dr. Prieſtley, and is to be found in the Oeuvres de St. Real, *a collection of ſmall pieces on the Evidence of the Chriſtian Religion.*

To thoſe who take Mr. Leſlie's tracts into their hands, I have only this ſhort advice to give. I beſeech them to remember, that if Chriſtianity be true, it is tremendouſly true. All the great things this world can ſhew are as nothing in compariſon of it. Heaven and Hell are the iſſue. Its facts yet to come are as certain as thoſe that are paſt. The trumpet ſhall ſound, and the dead ſhall be raiſed—the heavens ſhall be on fire, and the elements ſhall melt with fervent heat—the angels ſhall gather the elect of God from the four winds—all men ſhall be called upon to give an account of their words and actions—and they who now deny Jeſus Chriſt, and hold him in defiance, ſhall ſee the heaven and earth fly away before his face. A man muſt be ſtupified if he can think on theſe things without fleeing from the wrath to come: and there is no way but in the belief of Chriſtianity, which this book teaches.

I feel myſelf ſo deeply intereſted in this deſign of the Society, that I wiſh them all the aid and encouragement which Heaven and Earth can give them; and am their faithful Friend,

And devoted humble Servant,

WILLIAM JONES.

NAYLAND,
Feb. 23, 1799.

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A

SHORT AND EASY METHOD

WITH THE

DEISTS.

SIR,

I. IN anſwer to yours of the third inſtant, I much condole with you your unhappy circumſtances, of being placed amongſt ſuch company, where as you ſay, you continually hear the ſacred Scriptures, and the hiſtories therein contained, particularly of Moſes, and of Chriſt, and all revealed religion, turned into ridicule, by men who ſet up for ſenſe and reaſon. And they ſay that there is no greater ground to believe in Chriſt, than in Mahomet; that all theſe pretences to revelation are cheats, and ever have been among Pagans, Jews, Mahometans, and Chriſtians; that they are all alike impoſitions of cunning and deſigning men, upon the credulity, at firſt, of ſimple and unthinking people, till, their numbers increaſing, their delu-

ſions grew popular, came at laſt to be eſtabliſhed by laws; and then the force of education and cuſtom gives a bias to the judgments of after ages, till ſuch deceits come really to be believed, being received upon truſt from the ages foregoing, without examining into the original and bottom of them. Which theſe our modern men of ſenſe, (as they deſire to be eſteemed,) ſay that they only do, that they only have their judgments freed from the ſlaviſh authority of precedents and laws, in matters of truth, which, they ſay, ought only to be decided by reaſon; though by a prudent compliance with popularity and laws, they preſerve themſelves from outrage, and legal penalties; for none of their complection are addicted to ſufferings or martyrdom.

Now, Sir, that which you deſire from me, is ſome ſhort topic of reaſon, if ſuch can be found, whereby, without running to authorities, and the intricate mazes of learning, which breed long diſputes, and which theſe men of reaſon deny by wholeſale, though they can give no reaſon for it, only ſuppoſe that authors have been trumped upon us, interpolated and corrupted, ſo that no ſtreſs can be laid upon them, though it cannot be ſhewn wherein they are ſo corrupted; which, in reaſon, ought to lie upon them to prove who alledge it; otherwiſe it

is not only a precarious, but a guilty plea: and the more, that they refrain not to quote books on their ſide, for whoſe authority there are no better, or not ſo good grounds. However, you ſay, it makes your diſputes endleſs, and they go away with noiſe and clamour, and a boaſt, that there is nothing, at leaſt nothing certain, to be ſaid on the Chriſtian ſide. Therefore you are deſirous to find ſome one topic of reaſon, which ſhould demonſtrate the truth of the Chriſtian religion, and at the ſame time diſtinguiſh it from the impoſtures of Mahomet, and the old Pagan world; that our Deiſts may be brought to this teſt, and be obliged either to renounce their reaſon, and the common reaſon of mankind, or to ſubmit to the clear proof, from reaſon, of the Chriſtian religion; which muſt be ſuch a proof, as no impoſture can pretend to, otherwiſe it cannot prove the Chriſtian religion not to be an impoſture. And, whether ſuch a proof, one ſingle proof (to avoid confuſion) is not to be found out, you deſire to know from me.

And you ſay, that you cannot imagine but there muſt be ſuch a proof, becauſe every truth is in itſelf clear, and one; and therefore that one reaſon for it, if it be the true reaſon, muſt be ſufficient, and if ſufficient, it is better than many; for multiplicity confounds, eſpecially to weak judgments.

Sir, you have impoſed an hard taſk upon me, I wiſh I could perform it. For though every truth is one, yet our ſight is ſo feeble, that we cannot (always) come to it directly, but by many inferences, and laying of things together.

But I think, that in the caſe before us, there is ſuch a proof as you require, and I will ſet it down as ſhort and plain as I can.

II. Firſt, then, I ſuppoſe, that the truth of the doctrine of Chriſt will be ſufficiently evinced, if the matters of fact, which are recorded of him in the Goſpels, be true: for his miracles, if true, do vouch the truth of what he delivered.

The ſame is to be ſaid as to Moſes. If he brought the children of Iſrael through the Red Sea in that miraculous manner which is related in Exodus, and did ſuch other wonderful things as are there told of him, it muſt neceſſarily follow, that he was ſent from God: theſe being the ſtrongeſt proofs we can deſire, and which every Deiſt will confeſs he would acquieſce in, if he ſaw them with his eyes. Therefore the ſtreſs of this cauſe will depend upon the proof of theſe matters of fact.

1. And the method I will take, is, firſt, to lay down ſuch rules, as to the truth of matters of fact in general, that where they all meet, ſuch matters of fact cannot be falſe. And then, ſecondly, to ſhew that all theſe rules do meet in

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the matters of fact, of Moſes, and of Chriſt; and that they do not meet in the matters of fact of Mahomet, and the heathen deities, or can poſſibly meet in any impoſture whatſoever.

2. The rules are theſe: 1ſt. That the matters of fact be ſuch, as that men's outward ſenſes, their eyes and ears, may be judges of it. 2. That it be done publicly in the face of the world. 3. That not only public monuments be kept up in memory of it, but ſome outward actions to be performed. 4. That ſuch monuments, and ſuch actions or obſervances, be inſtituted, and do commence from the time that the matter of fact was done.

3. The two firſt rules make it impoſſible for any ſuch matter of fact to be impoſed upon men, at the time when ſuch matter of fact was ſaid to be done, becauſe every man's eyes and ſenſes would contradict it. For example: ſuppoſe any man ſhould pretend, that yeſterday he divided the Thames, in preſence of all the people of London, and carried the whole city, men, women, and children, over to Southwark, on dry land, the waters ſtanding like walls on both ſides: I ſay, it is morally impoſſible that he could perſuade the people of London that this was true, when every man, woman, and child could contradict him, and ſay, that this was a notorious falſhood, for that they had not

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ſeen the Thames ſo divided, or had gone over on dry land. Therefore I take it for granted (and I ſuppoſe, with the allowance of all the Deiſts in the world) that no ſuch impoſition could be put upon men, at the time when ſuch public matter of fact was ſaid to be done.

4. Therefore it only remains that ſuch matter of fact might be invented ſome time after, when the men of that generation wherein the thing was ſaid to be done, are all paſt and gone; and the credulity of after ages might be impoſed upon, to believe that things were done in former ages, which were not.

And for this, the two laſt rules ſecure us as much as the two firſt rules, in the former caſe; for whenever ſuch a matter of fact came to be invented, if not only monuments were ſaid to remain of it, but likewiſe that public actions and obſervances were conſtantly uſed ever ſince the matter of fact was ſaid to be done, the deceit muſt be detected, by no ſuch monuments appearing, and by the experience of every man, woman, and child, who muſt know that no ſuch actions or obſervances were ever uſed by them. For example: ſuppoſe I ſhould now invent a ſtory of ſuch a thing done a thouſand years ago, I might perhaps get ſome to believe it; but if I ſay, that not only ſuch a thing was done, but that, from that day to this, every man, at the

age

age of twelve years, had a joint of his little finger cut off; and that every man in the nation did want a joint of ſuch a finger; and that this inſtitution was ſaid to be part of the matter of fact done ſo many years ago, and vouched as a proof and confirmation of it, and as having deſcended, without interruption, and been conſtantly practiſed, in memory of ſuch matter of fact, all along, from the time that ſuch matter of fact was done: I ſay it is impoſſible I ſhould be believed in ſuch a caſe, becauſe every one could contradict me, as to the mark of cutting off a joint of the finger; and that being part of my original matter of fact, muſt demonſtrate the whole to be falſe.

III. Let us now come to the ſecond point, to ſhew that the matters of fact of Moſes, and of Chriſt, have all theſe rules or marks before mentioned; and that neither the matters of fact of Mahomet, or what is reported of the heathen deities, have the like: and that no impoſtor can have them all.

1. As to Moſes, I ſuppoſe it will be allowed me, that he could not have perſuaded 600,000 men, though he had brought them out of Egypt through the Red Sea; fed them forty years, without bread, by miraculous manna, and the other matters of fact recorded in his books, if they had not been true. Becauſe every man's

ſenſes that were then alive, muſt have contradicted it. And therefore he muſt have impoſed upon all their ſenſes, if he could have made them believe it, when it was falſe and no ſuch things done. So that here are the firſt and ſecond of the above-mentioned four marks.

From the ſame reaſon, it is equally impoſſible for him to have made them receive his five books, as truth, and not to have rejected them as a manifeſt impoſture; which told of all theſe things as done before their eyes, if they had not been ſo done. See how poſitively he ſpeaks to them, Deut. xi. 2, to verſe 8., "And know "you this day, for I ſpeak not with your children, which have not known, and which have "not ſeen the chaſtiſement of the Lord your "God, his greatneſs, his mighty hand, and his "ſtretched-out arm, and his miracles, and his "acts, which he did in the midſt of Egypt, "unto Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, and unto "all his land, and what he did unto the army "of Egypt, unto their horſes, and to their chariots; how he made the water of the Red "Sea to overflow them as they purſued after "you; and how the Lord hath deſtroyed them "unto this day: and what he did unto you in "the wilderneſs, until ye came unto this place; "and what he did unto Dathan and Abiram, "the ſons of Eliab, the ſon of Reuben, how "the

" the earth opened her mouth, and ſwallowed " them up, and their houſholds, and their tents, " and all the ſubſtance that was in their poſſeſ- " ſion, in the midſt of all Iſrael. But your eyes " have ſeen all the great acts of the Lord, which " he did," &c.

From hence we muſt ſuppoſe it impoſſible that theſe books of Moſes (if an impoſture) could have been invented and put upon the people who were then alive, when all theſe things were ſaid to be done.

The utmoſt therefore that even a ſuppoſe can ſtretch to, is, that theſe books were wrote in ſome age after Moſes, and put out in his name.

And to this, I ſay, that if it was ſo, it was impoſſible that thoſe books ſhould have been received as the books of Moſes, in that age wherein they may have been ſuppoſed to have been firſt invented. Why? Becauſe they ſpeak of themſelves as delivered by Moſes, and kept in the ark from his time. " And it came " to paſs, when Moſes had made an end of " writing the words of this law in a book, " until they were finiſhed, that Moſes com- " manded the Levites who bare the ark of the " covenant of the Lord, ſaying, take this book " of the law, and put it in the ſide of the ark " of the covenant of the Lord your God, that " it may be there for a witneſs againſt thee," Deut.

Deut. xxxi. 24, 25, 26. And there was a copy of this book to be left likewiſe with the king. "And it ſhall be, when he ſitteth upon "the throne of his kingdom, that he ſhall write "him a copy of this law in a book, out of "that which is before the prieſts, the Le-"vites: and it ſhall be with him, and he "ſhall read therein all the days of his life: "that he may learn to fear the Lord his "God, to keep all the words of this law "and theſe ſtatutes to do them." Deut. xviii 18, 19.

Here then you ſee that this book of the law ſpeaks of itſelf, not only as an hiſtory or relation of what things were then done, but as the ſtanding and municipal law and ſtatutes of the nation of the Jews, binding the king as well as the people.

Now, in whatever age after Moſes you will ſuppoſe this book to have been forged, it was impoſſible it could be received as truth; becauſe it was not then to be found, either in the ark, or with the king, or any where elſe: for when firſt invented, every body muſt know, that they had never heard of it before.

And therefore they could leſs believe it to be the book of their ſtatutes, and the ſtanding law of the land, which they had all along received, and by which they had been governed.

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Could any man, now at this day, invent a book of ſtatutes or acts of parliament for England, and make it paſs upon the nation as the only book of ſtatutes that ever they had known? As impoſſible was it for the books of Moſes (if they were invented in any age after Moſes) to have been received for what they declare themſelves to be, viz. the ſtatutes and municipal law of the nation of the Jews: and to have perſuaded the Jews, that they had owned and acknowledged theſe books, all along from the days of Moſes, to that day in which they were firſt invented; that is, that they had owned them before they had ever ſo much as heard of them. Nay, more, the whole nation muſt, in an inſtant, forget their former laws and government, if they could receive theſe books as being their former laws. And they could not otherwiſe receive them, becauſe they vouched themſelves ſo to be. Let me aſk the Deiſts but one ſhort queſtion: was there ever a book of ſham laws, which were not the laws of the nation, palmed upon any people, ſince the world began? If not, with what face can they ſay this of the book of laws of the Jews? Why will they ſay that of them, which they confeſs impoſſible in any nation, or among any people?

But they muſt be yet more unreaſonable. For

For the books of Moſes have a further demonſtration of their truth than even other law-books have: for they not only contain the laws, but give an hiſtorical account of their inſtitution, and the practice of them from that time: as of the paſſover in memory of the death of the firſt-born in Egypt *: and that the ſame day, all the firſt-born of Iſrael, both of man and beaſt, were, by a perpetual law, dedicated to God: and the Levites taken for all the firſt-born of the children of Iſrael. That Aaron's rod which budded, was kept in the ark, in memory of the rebellion, and wonderful deſtruction of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; and for the confirmation of the prieſthood to the tribe of Levi. As likewiſe the pot of manna, in memory of their having been fed with it forty years in the wilderneſs. That the brazen ſerpent was kept (which remained to the days of Hezekiah, 2 Kings xviii. 4.) in memory of that wonderful deliverance, by only looking upon it, from the biting of the fiery ſerpents. Num. xxi. 9. The feaſt of Pentecoſt, in memory of the dreadful appearance of God upon Mount Horeb, &c.

And beſides theſe remembrances of particular actions and occurrences, there were other ſolemn

* Numbers viii. 17, 18.

inſtitutions

inſtitutions in memory of their deliverance out of Egypt, in the general, which included all the particulars. As of the Sabbath, Deut. v. 15. Their daily ſacrifices, and yearly expiation; their new moons, and ſeveral feaſts and faſts. So that there were yearly, monthly, weekly, daily remembrances and recognitions of theſe things.

And not only ſo, but the books of the ſame Moſes tell us, that a particular tribe (of Levi) was appointed and conſecrated by God, as his prieſts; by whoſe hands, and none other, the ſacrifices of the people were to be offered, and theſe ſolemn inſtitutions to be celebrated. That it was death for any other to approach the altar. That their high prieſt wore a glorious mitre, and magnificent robes of God's own contrivance, with the miraculous Urim and Thummim in his breaſt-plate, whence the divine reſponſes were given *. That at his word, the king and all the people were to go out, and to come in. That theſe Levites were likewiſe the chief judges even in all civil cauſes, and that it was death to reſiſt their ſentence †. Now whenever it can be ſuppoſed that theſe books of Moſes were forged in ſome ages after Moſes,

* Numbers xxvii. 21.

† Deut xvii. 8 to 13. 1 Chron. xxiii. 4.

it is impoſſible they could have been received as true, unleſs the forgers could have made the whole nation believe, that they had received theſe books from their fathers, had been inſtructed in them when they were children, and had taught them to their children; moreover, that they had all been circumciſed, and did circumciſe their children, in purſuance to what was commanded in theſe books: that they had obſerved the yearly paſſover, the weekly ſabbath, the new moons, and all theſe ſeveral feaſts, faſts, and ceremonies commanded in theſe books: that they had never eaten any ſwines fleſh, or other meats prohibited in theſe books: that they had a magnificent tabernacle, with a viſible prieſthood to adminiſter in it, which was confined to the tribe of Levi; over whom was placed a glorious high-prieſt, cloathed with great and mighty prerogatives: whoſe death only could deliver thoſe that were fled to the cities of refuge *. And that theſe prieſts were their ordinary judges, even in civil matters: I ſay, was it poſſible to have perſuaded a whole nation of men, that they had known and practiſed all theſe things, if they had not done it? or, ſecondly, to have received a book for truth, which ſaid they had practiſed them, and appealed to that practice?

* Numbers xxxv. 25, 28.

So

So that here are the third and fourth of the marks above-mentioned.

But now let us deſcend to the utmoſt degree of ſuppoſition, viz. that theſe things were practiſed, before theſe books of Moſes were forged; and that thoſe books did only impoſe upon the nation, in making them believe, that they had kept theſe obſervances in memory of ſuch and ſuch things, as were inſerted in thoſe books.

Well then, let us proceed upon this ſuppoſition, (however groundleſs) and now, will not the ſame impoſſibilities occur, as in the former caſe? For, firſt, this muſt ſuppoſe that the Jews kept all theſe obſervances in memory of nothing; or without knowing any thing of their original, or the reaſon why they kept them. Whereas theſe very obſervances did expreſs the ground and reaſon of their being kept, as the Paſſover, in memory of God's paſſing over the children of the Iſraelites, in that night wherein he ſlew all the firſt-born of Egypt, and ſo of the reſt.

But, ſecondly, let us ſuppoſe, contrary both to reaſon and matter of fact, that the Jews did not know any reaſon at all why they kept theſe obſervances; yet was it poſſible to put it upon them. That they had kept theſe obſervances in memory of what they had never heard of before that day, whenſoever you will ſuppoſe that theſe

theſe books of Moſes were firſt forged? For example, ſuppoſe I ſhould now forge ſome romantic ſtory, of ſtrange things done a thouſand years ago; and, in confirmation of this, ſhould endeavour to perſuade the Chriſtian world, that they had all along, from that day to this, kept the firſt day of the week in memory of ſuch an hero, an Apollonius, a Barcoſbas, or a Mahomet; and had all been baptized in his name; and ſwore by his name, and upon that very book, (which I had then forged, and which they never ſaw before) in their public judicatures; that this book was their goſpel and law, which they had ever ſince that time, theſe thouſand years paſt, univerſally received and owned, and none other. I would aſk any Deiſt, whether he thinks it poſſible that ſuch a cheat could paſs, or ſuch a legend be received as the goſpel of Chriſtians; and that they could be made believe that they never had any other goſpel? The ſame reaſon is as to the books of Moſes; and muſt be, as to every matter of fact, which has all the four marks before-mentioned; and theſe marks ſecure any ſuch matter of fact as much from being invented and impoſed in any after ages, as at the time when ſuch matters of fact were ſaid to be done.

Let me give one very familiar example more in this caſe. There is the Stonehenge in Saliſbury-Plain, every body knows it; and yet none knows

knows the reaſon why thoſe great ſtones were ſet there, or by whom, or in memory of what.

Now ſuppoſe I ſhould write a book to-morrow, and tell there, that theſe ſtones were ſet up by Hercules, Polyphemus, or Garagantua, in memory of ſuch and ſuch of their actions. And for a further confirmation of this, ſhould ſay in this book, that it was wrote at the time when ſuch actions were done, and by the very actors themſelves, or eye witneſſes. And that this book had been received as truth and quoted by authors of the greateſt reputation in all ages ſince. Moreover that this book was well known in England, and enjoined by act of parliament to be taught our children, and that we did teach it to our children, and had been taught it ourſelves when we were children. I aſk any Deiſt, whether he thinks this could paſs upon England? And whether, if I, or any other ſhould inſiſt upon it, we ſhould not, inſtead of being believed, be ſent to Bedlam?

Now let us compare this with the Stonehenge, as I may call it, or twelve great ſtones ſet up at Gilgal, which is told in the fourth chapter of Joſhua. There it is ſaid, verſe 6, that the reaſon why they were ſet up, was, that when their children, in after ages, ſhould aſk the meaning of it, it ſhould be told them.

And the thing in memory of which they were

ſet up, was ſuch as could not poſſibly be impoſed upon that nation, at that time when it was ſaid to be done, it was as wonderful and miraculous as their paſſage through the Red Sea.

And withal, free from a very poor objection, which the Deiſts have advanced againſt that miracle of the Red Sea: thinking to ſalve it by a ſpring-tide, with the concurrence of a ſtrong wind, happening at the ſame time; which left the ſand ſo dry, as that the Iſraelites being all foot, might paſs through the oozy places and holes, which it muſt be ſuppoſed the ſea left behind it: but that the Egyptians, being all horſe and chariots, ſtuck in thoſe holes, and were entangled, ſo as that they could not march ſo faſt as the Iſraelites: and that this was all the meaning of its being ſaid, that God took off their (the Egyptians) chariot wheels, that they drove them heavily. So that they would make nothing extraordinary, at leaſt, nothing miraculous, in all this action.

This is advanced in Le Clerc's Diſſertations upon Geneſis, lately printed in Holland, and that part with others of the like tendency, endeavouring to reſolve other miracles, as that of Sodom and Gomorrah, &c. into the mere natural cauſes, are put into Engliſh by the well-known T. Brown, for the edification of the Deiſts in England.

But

But theſe gentlemen have forgot, that the Iſraelites had great herds of many thouſand cattle with them; which would be apter to ſtray, and fall into thoſe holes and oozy places in the ſtrand, than horſes with riders, who might direct them.

But ſuch precarious and ſilly ſuppoſes are not worth the anſwering. If there had been no more in this paſſage through the Red Sea than that of a ſpring-tide, &c. it had been impoſſible for Moſes to have made the Iſraelites believe that relation given of it in Exodus, with ſo many particulars, which themſelves ſaw to be true.

And all thoſe Scriptures which magnify this action, and appeal to it as a full demonſtration of the miraculous power of God, muſt be reputed as romance or legend.

I ſay this, for the ſake of ſome Chriſtians, who think it no prejudice to the truth of the Holy Bible, but rather an advantage, as rendering it more eaſy to be believed, if they can ſolve whatever ſeems miraculous in it, by the power of ſecond cauſes: and ſo to make all, as they ſpeak, natural and eaſy. Wherein, if they could prevail, the natural and eaſy reſult would be, not to believe one word in all thoſe ſacred oracles. For if things be not as they are told in any relation, that relation muſt be falſe. And if falſe in part, we cannot truſt to it, either in whole or in part.

Here are to be excepted miſ-tranſlations and errors, either in copy or in preſs. But where there is no room for ſuppoſing of theſe, as where all copies do agree; there we muſt either receive all, or reject all. I mean in any book that pretends to be written from the mouth of God. For in other common hiſtories, we may believe part, and reject part, as we ſee cauſe.

But to return. The paſſage of the Iſraelites over Jordan, in memory of which thoſe ſtones at Gilgal were ſet up, is free from all thoſe little carpings before-mentioned, that are made as to the paſſage through the Red Sea. For notice was given to the Iſraelites the day before, of this great miracle to be done, Joſh. iii. 5. It was done at noon-day, before the whole nation. And when the waters of Jordan were divided, it was not at any low ebb, but at the time when that river overflowed all his banks, ver. 15. And it was done, not by winds, or in length of time, which winds muſt take to do it: but all on the ſudden, as ſoon as the "feet of the prieſts that "bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the "water, then the waters which came down from "above, ſtood and roſe up upon an heap, very "far from the city Adam, that is beſide Zaretan: "and thoſe that came down toward the ſea of "the plain, even the ſalt ſea, failed, and were "cut off: and the people paſſed over, right "againſt

"against Jericho. The prieſts ſtood in the midſt "of Jordan, till all the armies of Iſrael had "paſſed over. And it came to paſs, when the "prieſts that bare the ark of the covenant of the "Lord were come up, out of the midſt of Jordan, "and the ſoles of the prieſts' feet were lift up "upon the dry land, that the waters of Jordan "returned unto their place, and flowed over all "his banks as they did before. And the people "came out of Jordan, on the tenth day of the "first month, and encamped in Gilgal on the "eaſt border of Jericho, and thoſe twelve ſtones "which they took out of Jordan, did Joſhua "pitch in Gilgal. And he ſpake unto the "children of Iſrael, ſaying, When your children "ſhall aſk their fathers in time to come, ſaying, "What mean theſe ſtones? Then ſhall ye let "your children know, ſaying, Iſrael came over "this Jordan on dry land. For the Lord your "God dried up the waters of Jordan from before "you, until ye were paſſed over; as the Lord "your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried "up from before us, until we were gone over, "that all the people of the earth might know "the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty: that "ye might fear the Lord your God for ever." Chap. iv. from ver. 18.

If the paſſage over the Red Sea had been only taking advantage of a ſpring tide, or the like,

how would this teach all the people of the earth, that the hand of the Lord was mighty? How would a thing no more remarkable have been taken notice of through all the world? How would it have taught Iſrael to fear the Lord, when they muſt know, that notwithſtanding of all theſe big words, there was ſo little in it? How could they have believed, or received a book, as truth, which they knew, told the matter ſo far otherwiſe from what it was?

But, as I ſaid, this paſſage over Jordan, which is here compared to that of the Red Sea, is free from all thoſe cavils that are made, as to that of the Red Sea, and is a further atteſtation to it, being ſaid to be done in the ſame manner as was that of the Red Sea.

Now, to form our argument, let us ſuppoſe, that there never was any ſuch thing as that paſſage over Jordan. That theſe ſtones at Gilgal were ſet up upon ſome other occaſion, in ſome after age. And then, that ſome deſigning man invented this book of Joſhua, and ſaid, that it was wrote by Joſhua at that time. And gave this ſtonage at Gilgal for a teſtimony of the truth of it. Would not every body ſay to him, we know the ſtonage at Gilgal, but we never heard before of this reaſon for it? Nor of this book of Joſhua? Where has it been all this while? And where, and how came you, after ſo many ages, to find it?

it? Beſides, this book tells us, that this paſſage over Jordan was ordained to be taught our children, from age to age: and therefore, that they were always to be inſtructed in the meaning of that ſtonage at Gilgal, as a memorial of it. But we were never taught it, when we were children; nor did ever teach our children any ſuch thing. And it is not likely that could have been forgotten, while ſo remarkable a ſtonage did continue, which was ſet up for that and no other end!

And if, for the reaſons before given, no ſuch impoſition could be put upon us as to the ſtonage in Saliſbury-Plain; how much leſs could it be to the ſtonage at Gilgal?

And if where we know not the reaſon of a bare naked monument, ſuch a ſham reaſon cannot be impoſed, how much more is it impoſſible to impoſe upon us in actions and obſervances, which we celebrate in memory of particular paſſages? How impoſſible to make us forget thoſe paſſages which we daily commemorate; and perſuade us, that we had always kept ſuch inſtitutions in memory of what we never heard of before; that is, that we knew it, before we knew it!

And if we find it thus impoſſible for an impoſition to be put upon us, even in ſome things which have not all the four marks before-mentioned; how much more impoſſible is it, that

any deceit ſhould be in that thing where all the four marks do meet!

This has been ſhewed in the firſt place, as to the matters of fact of Moſes.

2. Therefore I come now (ſecondly) to ſhew, that as in the matters of fact of Moſes, ſo likewiſe all theſe four marks do meet in the matters of fact, which are recorded in the Goſpel of our bleſſed Saviour. And my work herein will be the ſhorter, becauſe all that is ſaid before of Moſes and his books, is every way as applicable to Chriſt and his Goſpel. His works and his miracles are there ſaid to be done publicly in the face of the world, as he argued to his accuſers, "I ſpake openly to the world, and in ſecret have "I ſaid nothing," John xviii. 20. It is told, Acts ii. 41, that three thouſand at one time; and, Acts iv. 4, that above five thouſand at another time, were converted, upon conviction of what themſelves had ſeen, what had been done publicly before their eyes, wherein it was impoſſible to have impoſed upon them. Therefore here were the two firſt of the rules before-mentioned.

Then for the two ſecond: Baptiſm and the Lord's Supper were inſtituted as perpetual memorials of theſe things; and they were not inſtituted in after ages, but at the very time when theſe things were ſaid to be done; and have been obſerved

ſerved without interruption, in all ages through the whole Chriſtian world, down all the way from that time to this. And Chriſt himſelf did ordain apoſtles and other miniſters of his Goſpel, to preach and adminiſter the ſacraments; and to govern his church: and that always, even unto the end of the world *. Accordingly they have continued by regular ſucceſſion, to this day: and, no doubt, ever ſhall, while the earth ſhall laſt. So that the Chriſtian clergy are as notorious a matter of fact, as the tribe of Levi among the Jews. And the Goſpel is as much a law to the Chriſtians, as the book of Moſes to the Jews: and it being part of the matters of fact related in the Goſpel, that ſuch an order of men were appointed by Chriſt, and to continue to the end of the world; conſequently, if the Goſpel was a fiction, and invented (as it muſt be) in ſome ages after Chriſt; then, at that time when it was firſt invented, there could be no ſuch order of clergy, as derived themſelves from the inſtitution of Chriſt; which muſt give the lye to the Goſpel, and demonſtrate the whole to be falſe. And the matters of fact of Chriſt being preſſed to be true, no otherwiſe than as there was at that time (whenever the Deiſts will ſuppoſe the Goſpel to be forged) not only public ſacraments of Chriſt's

* Matt. xviii. 20.

inſtitution, but an order of clergy, likewiſe of his appointment to adminiſter them: and it being impoſſible there could be any ſuch things before they were invented, it is as impoſſible that they ſhould be received when invented. And therefore, by what was ſaid above, it was as impoſſible to have impoſed upon mankind in this matter, by inventing of it in after-ages, as at the time when thoſe things were ſaid to be done.

3. The matters of fact of Mahomet, or what is fabled of the deities, do all want ſome of the aforeſaid four rules, whereby the certainty of matters of fact is demonſtrated. Firſt, for Mahomet, he pretended to no miracles, as he tells us in his Alcoran, c. 6, &c. and thoſe which are commonly told of him paſs among the Mahometans themſelves, but as legendary fables: and, as ſuch, are rejected by the wiſe and learned among them; as the legends of their ſaints are in the church of Rome. See Dr. Prideaux's Life of Mahomet, page 34.

But, in the next place, thoſe which are told of him, do all want the two firſt rules beforementioned. For his pretended converſe with the moon: his merſa, or night journey from Mecca to Jeruſalem, and thence to heaven, &c. were not perfórmed before any body. We have only his own word for them. And they are as groundleſs as the deluſions of the Fox or Muggleton among

among ourſelves. The ſame is to be ſaid (in the ſecond place) of the fables of the heathen gods, of Mercury's ſtealing ſheep, Jupiter's turning himſelf into a bull, and the like; beſides the folly and unworthineſs of ſuch ſenſeleſs pretended miracles. And moreover the wiſe among the heathen did reckon no otherwiſe of theſe but as fables, which had a mythology, or myſtical meaning in them, of which ſeveral of them have given us the rationale or explication. And it is plain enough that Ovid meant no other by all his Metamorphoſes.

It is true, the heathen deities had their prieſts: they had likewiſe feaſts, games, and other public inſtitutions in memory of them. But all theſe want the fourth mark, viz. that ſuch prieſthood and inſtitutions ſhould commence from the time that ſuch things as they commemorate were ſaid to be done; otherwiſe they cannot ſecure after ages from the impoſture, by detecting it, at the time when firſt invented, as hath been argued before. But the Bacchanalia, and other heathen feaſts, were inſtituted many ages after what was reported of theſe gods was ſaid to be done, and therefore can be no proof. And the prieſts of Bacchus, Apollo, &c. were not ordained by theſe ſuppoſed gods: but were appointed by others, in after ages, only in honour to them. And therefore theſe orders of prieſts are no evi-

dence to the matters of fact which are reported of their gods.

IV. Now to apply what has been ſaid. You may challenge all the Deiſts in the world to ſhew any action that is fabulous, which has all the four rules or marks before-mentioned. No, it is impoſſible. And (to reſume a little what is ſpoke to before) the hiſtories of Exodus and the Goſpel never could have been received, if they had not been true; becauſe the inſtitution of the prieſthood of Levi, and of Chriſt; of the Sabbath, the Paſſover, of Circumciſion, of Baptiſm, and the Lord's Supper, &c. are there related, as deſcending all the way down from thoſe times, without interruption. And it is full as impoſſible to perſuade men that they had been circumciſed or baptized, had circumciſed or baptized their children, celebrated paſſovers, ſabbaths, ſacraments, &c. under the government and adminiſtration of a certain order of prieſts, if they had done none of theſe things, as to make them believe that they had gone through ſeas upon dry land, ſeen the dead raiſed, &c. And without believing theſe, it was impoſſible that either the law or the goſpel could have been received.

And the truth of the matters of fact of Exodus and the goſpel, being no otherwiſe preſſed upon men, than as they have practiſed ſuch public inſtitutions, it is appealing to the ſenſes of mankind

kind for the truth of them; and makes it impoſſible for any to have invented ſuch ſtories in after ages, without a palpable detection of the cheat when firſt invented; as impoſſible as to have impoſed upon the ſenſes of mankind, at the time when ſuch public matters of fact were ſaid to be done.

V. I do not ſay, that every thing which wants theſe four marks is falſe: but, that nothing can be falſe, which has them all.

I have no manner of doubt that there was ſuch a man as Julius Cæſar, that he fought at Pharſalia, was killed in the ſenate-houſe, and many other matters of fact of ancient times, though we keep no public obſervances in memory of them.

But this ſhews that the matters of fact of Moſes and of Chriſt, have come down to us better guarded than any other matters of fact, how true ſoever.

And yet our Deiſts, who would laugh any man out of the world as an irrational brute, that ſhould offer to deny Cæſar or Alexander, Homer or Virgil, their public works and actions, do, at the ſame time, value themſelves as the only men of wit and ſenſe, of free, generous, and unbiaſſed judgments for ridiculing the hiſtories of Moſes and Chriſt, that are infinitely better atteſted, and guarded with infallible marks which the others want.

VI. Beſides

VI. Beſides that the importance of the ſubject would oblige all men to enquire more narrowly into the one than the other: for what conſequence is it to me, or to the world, whether there was ſuch a man as Cæſar, whether he beat, or was beaten at Pharſalia, whether Homer or Virgil wrote ſuch books, and whether what is related in the Iliads or Æneids be true or falſe? It is not two-pence up or down to any man in the world. And therefore it is worth no man's while to enquire into it, either to oppoſe or juſtify the truth of theſe relations.

But our very ſouls and bodies, both this life and eternity are concerned in the truth of what is related in the holy Scriptures; and therefore men would be more inquiſitive to ſearch into the truth of theſe, than of any other matters of fact; examine and ſift them narrowly; and find out the deceit, if any ſuch could be found: for it concerned them nearly, and was of the laſt importance to them.

How unreaſonable then is it to reject theſe matters of fact, ſo ſifted, ſo examined, and ſo atteſted as no other matters of fact in the world ever were; and yet to think it the moſt highly unreaſonable, even to madneſs, to deny other matters of fact, which have not the thouſandth part of their evidence, and are of no conſequence at all to us whether true or falſe!

VII. There

VII. There are ſeveral other topics, from whence the truth of the Chriſtian Religion is evinced to all who will judge by reaſon, and give themſelves leave to conſider. As the improbability that ten or twelve poor illiterate fiſhermen ſhould form a deſign of converting the whole world to believe their deluſions; and the impoſſibility of their effecting it, without force of arms, learning, oratory, or any one viſible thing that could recommend them! And to impoſe a doctrine quite oppoſite to the luſts and pleaſures of men, and all worldly advantages or enjoyments! And this in an age of ſo great learning and ſagacity as that wherein the Goſpel was firſt preached! That theſe apoſtles ſhould not only undergo all the ſcorn and contempt, but the ſevereſt perſecutions and moſt cruel deaths that could be inflicted, in atteſtation to what themſelves knew to be a mere deceit and forgery of their own contriving! Some have ſuffered for errors which they thought to be truth, but never any for what themſelves knew to be lies. And the apoſtles muſt know what they thought to be lies, if it was ſo, becauſe they ſpoke of thoſe things which, they ſaid, they had both ſeen and heard, had looked upon and handled with their hands, &c *.

* Acts iv. 20. 1 John i. 1.

Neither

Neither can it be, that they, perhaps, might have propoſed ſome temporal advantages to themſelves, but miſſed of them, and met with ſufferings inſtead of them: for, if it had been ſo, it is more than probable, that when they ſaw their diſappointment, they would have diſcovered their conſpiracy; eſpecially when they might not have only ſaved their lives, but got great rewards for doing of it. That not one of them ſhould ever have been brought to do this.

But this is not all: for they tell us that their Maſter bid them expect nothing but ſufferings in this world. This is the tenure of that Goſpel which they taught; and they told the ſame to all whom they converted. So that here was no diſappointment.

For all that were converted by them, were converted upon the certain expectation of ſufferings, and bidden prepare for it. Chriſt commanded his diſciples to take up their croſs daily, and follow him; and told them, that in the world they ſhould have tribulation; that whoever did not forſake father, mother, wife, children, lands, and their very lives, could not be his diſciples; that he who ſought to ſave his life in this world, ſhould loſe it in the next.

Now that this deſpiſed doctrine of the croſs ſhould prevail ſo univerſally againſt the allure-

ments

ments of flesh and blood, and all the blandishments of this world; against the rage and persecution of all the kings and powers of the earth, must shew its original to be divine, and its protector almighty. What is it else could conquer without arms; persuade without rhetoric; overcome enemies; disarm tyrants; and subdue empires without opposition!

VIII. We may add to all this, the testimonies of the most bitter enemies and persecutors of Christianity, both Jews and Gentiles, to the truth of the matter of fact of Christ, such as Josephus and Tacitus; of which the first flourished about forty years after the death of Christ, and the other about seventy years after: so that they were capable of examining into the truth, and wanted not prejudice and malice sufficient to have inclined them to deny the matter of fact itself of Christ: but their confessing to it, as likewise Lucian, Celsus, Porphyry, and Julian the apostate; the Mahometans since, and all other enemies of Christianity that have arisen in the world, is an undeniable attestation to the truth of the matter of fact.

IX. But there is another argument more strong and convincing than even this matter of fact; more than the certainty of what I see with my eyes; and which the Apostle Peter called a more sure word, that is proof, than what

[illegible] he

he ſaw and heard upon the Holy Mount, when our bleſſed Saviour was transfigured before him and two other of the apoſtles: for having repeated that paſſage as a proof of that whereof they were eye witneſſes, and heard the voice from heaven giving atteſtation to our Lord Chriſt, 2 Pet. i. 16, 17, 18. he ſays, verſe 19, "We have alſo a more ſure word of prophecy," for the proof of this Jeſus being the Meſſiah, that is, the prophecies which had gone before of him from the beginning of the world, and all exactly fulfilled in him.

Men may diſpute an impoſition or deluſion upon our outward ſenſes. But how that can be falſe, which has been ſo long, even from the beginning of the world, and ſo often by all the prophets in ſeveral ages foretold; how can this be an impoſition or a forgery?

This is particularly inſiſted on in the Method with the Jews. And even the Deiſts muſt confeſs, that that book we call the Old Teſtament, was in being in the hands of the Jews long before our Saviour came into the world. And if they will be at the pains to compare the prophecies that are there of the Meſſiah, with the fulfilling of them, as to time, place, and all other circumſtances in the perſon, birth, life, death, reſurrection and aſcenſion of our bleſſed Saviour, will find this proof what our apoſtle

apoſtle here calls it, "a light ſhining in a dark "place, until the day dawn, and the day-ſtar "ariſe in your hearts." Which God grant. Here is no poſſibility of deceit or impoſture.

Old prophecies (and all ſo agreeing) could not have been contrived to countenance a new cheat: and nothing could be a cheat, that could fulfil all theſe.

For this therefore I refer the Deiſts to the Method with the Jews.

I deſire them likewiſe to look there, ſect. xi. and conſider the prophecies given ſo long ago, of which they ſee the fulfilling at this day with their own eyes, of the ſtate of the Jews for many ages paſt and at preſent, without a king or prieſt, or temple, or ſacrifice, ſcattered to the four winds, ſifted as with a ſieve, among all nations; yet preſerved, and always ſo to be, a diſtinct people from all others of the whole earth. Whereas thoſe mighty monarchies which oppreſſed the Jews, and which commanded the world in their turns, and had the greateſt human proſpect of perpetuity, were to be extinguiſhed, as they have been, even that their names ſhould be blotted out from under heaven.

As likewiſe, that as remarkable of our bleſſed Saviour, concerning the preſervation and progreſs of the Chriſtian church, when in her

ſwaddling

ſwaddling cloaths, conſiſting only of a few poor fiſhermen. Not by the ſword, as that of Mahomet, but under all the perſecution of men and hell: which yet ſhould not prevail againſt her.

But though I offer theſe, as not to be ſlighted by the Deiſts, to which they can ſhew nothing equal in all prophane hiſtory, and in which it is impoſſible any cheat can lie; yet I put them not upon the ſame foot as the prophecies before-mentioned of the marks and coming of the Meſſiah, which have been ſince the world began.

And that general expectation of the whole earth, at the time of his coming, inſiſted upon in the Method with the Jews, ſect. 5, is greatly to be noticed.

But, I ſay, the foregoing prophecies of our Saviour are ſo ſtrong a proof, as even miracles would not be ſufficient to break their authority.

I mean, if it were poſſible that a true miracle could be wrought in contradiction to them: for that would be for God to contradict himſelf.

But no ſign or wonder, that could poſſibly be ſolved, ſhould ſhake this evidence.

It is this that keeps the Jews in their obſtinacy; though they cannot deny the matters of fact done by our bleſſed Saviour to be truly miracles, if ſo done as ſaid. Nor can they deny that

that they were ſo done, becauſe they have all the four marks before-mentioned. Yet they cannot yield! Why? Becauſe they think that the Goſpel is in contradiction to the law; which, if it were, the conſequence would be unavoidable, that both could not be true. To ſolve this, is the buſineſs of the Method with the Jews. But the contradiction which they ſuppoſe, is in their comments that they put upon the law; eſpecially they expect a literal fulfilling of thoſe promiſes of the reſtoration of Jeruſalem, and outward glories of the church, of which there is ſuch frequent mention in the books of Moſes, the Pſalms, and all the Prophets. And many Chriſtians do expect the ſame, and take thoſe texts as literally as the Jews do. We do believe and pray for the converſion of the Jews. For this end they have been ſo miraculouſly preſerved, according to the prophecies ſo long before of it. And when that time ſhall come, as they are the moſt honourable and ancient of all the nations on the earth, ſo will their church return to be the mother Chriſtian church as ſhe was at firſt; and Rome muſt ſurrender to Jeruſalem. Then all nations will flow thither; and even Ezekiel's temple may be literally built there, in the metropolis of the whole earth; which Jeruſalem muſt be, when the fulneſs of the Gentiles ſhall meet with

with the converſion of the Jews. For no nation will then contend with the Jews, nor church with Jeruſalem for ſupremacy. All nations will be ambitious to draw their original from the Jews, "whoſe are the fathers and "from whom, as concerning the fleſh, Chriſt "came."

Then will be fulfilled that outward grandeur and reſtoration of the Jews and of Jeruſalem, which they expect, purſuant to the prophecies.

They pretend not that this is limited to any particular time of the reign of the Meſſiah. They are ſure it will not be at the beginning; for they expect to go through great conflicts and trials with their Meſſiah (as the Chriſtian church has done) before his final conqueſt, and that they come to reign with him. So that this is no obſtruction to their embracing of Chriſtianity. They ſee the ſame things fulfilled in us, which they expect themſelves; and we expect the ſame things they do.

I tell this to the Deiſts, leſt they may think that the Jews have ſome ſtronger arguments than they know of, that they are not perſuaded by the miracles of our bleſſed Saviour, and by the fulfilling of all the prophecies in him, that were made concerning the Meſſiah.

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As I ſaid before, I would not plead even miracles againſt theſe.

And if this is ſufficient to perſuade a Jew, it is much more ſo to a Deiſt, who labours not under theſe objections.

Beſides, I would not ſeem to claſh with that (in a ſound ſenſe) reaſonable caution uſed by Chriſtian writers, not to put the iſſue of the truth wholly upon miracles, without this addition, when not done in a contradiction to the revelations already given in the Holy Scriptures.

And they do it upon this conſideration, that though it is impoſſible to ſuppoſe that God would work a real miracle, in contradiction to what he has already revealed; yet, men may be impoſed upon by falſe and ſeeming miracles, and pretended revelations, (as there are many examples, eſpecially in the church of Rome) and ſo may be ſhaken in the faith, if they keep not to the Holy Scriptures as their rule.

We are told, 2 Theſſ. ii. 9, "of him whoſe "coming is after the working of Satan, with "all power and ſigns, and lying wonders." And Rev. xiii. 14. xvi. 14. and xix. 20. of the devil, and falſe prophets working miracles. But the word, in all theſe places, is only Σημεῖα, *Signs*, that is, as it is rendered, Matt. xxv. 24, which, though ſometimes it may be uſed to ſignify real miracles, yet not always, not in theſe places.

places. For though every miracle be a ſign and a wonder, yet every ſign or wonder is not a miracle.

X. Here it may be proper to conſider a common topic of the Deiſts, who, when they are not able to ſtand out againſt the evidence of fact, that ſuch and ſuch miracles have been done, then turn about, and deny ſuch things to be miracles, at leaſt we can never be ſure whether any wonderful thing that is ſhewn to us be a true or a falſe miracle.

And the great argument they go upon is this, that a miracle being that which exceeds the power of nature, we cannot know what exceeds it, unleſs we knew the utmoſt extent of the power of nature; and no man pretends to know that, therefore that no man can certainly know whether any event be miraculous; and, conſequently, he may be cheated in his judgment betwixt true and falſe miracles.

To which I anſwer, that men may be ſo cheated, and there are many examples of it.

But that though we may not always know when we are cheated, yet we can certainly tell, in many caſes, when we are not cheated.

For though we do not know the utmoſt extent of the power of nature, perhaps in any one thing; yet it does not follow that we know not the nature of any thing in ſome meaſure: and

and that certainly too. For example, though I do not know the utmoſt extent of the power of fire, yet I certainly know that it is the nature of fire to burn; and that when proper fuel is adminiſtered to it, it is contrary to the nature of fire not to conſume it. Therefore, if I ſee three men taken off the ſtreet, in their common wearing apparel, and without any preparation caſt into the midſt of a burning fiery furnace, and that the flame was ſo fierce that it burnt up thoſe men that threw them in, and yet that theſe who were thrown in ſhould walk up and down in the bottom of the furnace, and I ſhould ſee a fourth perſon with them of glorious appearance, like the Son of God. And that theſe men ſhould come up again out of the furnace, without any harm, or ſo much as the ſmell of fire upon themſelves or their clothes, I could not be deceived in thinking that there was a ſtop put to the nature of fire, as to theſe men; and that it had its effect upon the men whom it burned, at the ſame time.

Again: though I cannot tell how wonderful and ſudden an increaſe of corn might be produced by the concurrence of many cauſes, as a warm climate, the fertility of the ſoil, &c. yet this I can certainly know, that there is not that natural force in the breath of two or three words, ſpoken to multiply one ſmall loaf of bread ſo

faſt, in the breaking of it, as truly and really, not only in appearance and ſhew to the eye, but to fill the bellies of ſeveral thouſand hungry perſons; and that the fragments ſhould be much more than the bread was at firſt.

So neither in a word ſpoken, to raiſe the dead, cure diſeaſes, &c.

Therefore, though we know not the utmoſt extent of the power of nature; yet we certainly know what is contrary to the nature of ſeveral ſuch things as we do know.

And therefore, though we may be cheated, and impoſed upon in many ſeeming miracles and wonders; yet there are ſome things wherein we may be certain.

But further, the Deiſts acknowledge a God of an Almighty power, who made all things.

Yet they would put it out of his power to make any revelation of his will to mankind. For if we cannot be certain of any miracle, how ſhould we know when God ſent any thing extraordinary to us?

Nay, how ſhould we know the ordinary power of nature, if we know not what exceeded it? If we know not what is natural, how do we know there is ſuch a thing as nature? That all is not ſupernatural, all miracles, and ſo diſputable, till we come to downright ſcepticiſm, and doubt the certainty of our outward ſenſes, whether

ther we ſee, hear, or feel; or all be not a miraculous illuſion!

Which, becauſe I know the Deiſts are not inclined to do, therefore I will return to purſue my argument upon the conviction of our outward ſenſes, deſiring only this, that they would allow the ſenſes of other men to be as certain as their own; which they cannot refuſe, ſince without this they can have no certainty of their own.

XI. Therefore, from what has been ſaid, the cauſe is ſummed up ſhortly in this; that though we cannot ſee what was done before our time, yet by the marks which I have laid down concerning the certainty of matters of fact done before our time, we may be as much aſſured of the truth of them, as if we ſaw them with our eyes; becauſe whatever matter of fact has all the four marks before-mentioned, could never have been invented and received but upon the conviction of the outward ſenſes of all thoſe who did receive it, as before is demonſtrated. And therefore this topic which I have choſen, does ſtand upon the conviction even of men's outward ſenſes. And ſince you have confined me to one topic, I have not inſiſted upon the other, which I have only named.

XII. And now it lies upon the Deiſts, if they would appear as men of reaſon, to ſhew ſome

matter of fact of former ages, which they allow to be true, that has greater evidence of its truth, than the matters of fact of Moſes and of Chriſt; otherwiſe they cannot, with any ſhew of reaſon, reject the one, and yet admit of the other.

But I have given them greater latitude than this, for I have ſhewn ſuch marks of the truth of the matters of fact of Moſes and of Chriſt; as no other matters of fact of thoſe times, however true, have, but theſe only: and I put it upon them to ſhew any forgery that has all theſe marks.

This is a ſhort iſſue. Keep them cloſe to this. This determines the cauſe all at once.

Let them produce their Apollonius Tyanæus, whoſe life was put into English by the execrable Charles Blount *, and compared with all the wit and

* The hand of that ſcorner, which durſt write ſuch outrageous blaſphemy againſt his Maker, the Divine Vengeance has made his own executioner. Which I would not have mentioned (becauſe the like judgment has befallen others) but that the Theiſtical Club have ſet this up as a principle, and printed a vindication of this ſame Blount for murdering himſelf, by way of juſtification of ſelf-murder; which ſome of them have ſince, as well as formerly, horridly practiſed upon themſelves. Therefore this is no common judgment to which they are delivered, but a viſible mark ſet upon them, to ſhew how far God has forſaken them; and as a caution to all Chriſtians, to beware

and malice he was maſter of, to the life and miracles of our bleſſed Saviour.

Let them take aid from all the legends in the Church of Rome, thoſe pious cheats, the foreſt diſgraces of Chriſtianity; and which have bid the faireſt of any one contrivance, to overturn the certainty of the miracles of Chriſt and his apoſtles, the whole truth of the Goſpels, by putting them all upon the ſame foot: at leaſt they are ſo underſtood by the generality of their devotees, though diſowned and laughed at by the learned, and men of ſenſe among them.

Let them pick and chooſe the moſt probable of all the fables of the heathen deities, and ſee if they can find in any of theſe, the four marks before-mentioned.

Otherwiſe let them ſubmit to the irrefragable certainty of the Chriſtian religion.

XIII. But if, notwithſtanding all that is ſaid, the Deiſts, will ſtill contend that all this is but prieſt-craft, the invention of prieſts for their own profit, &c. then they will give us an idea of prieſts, far different from what they intend: for then we muſt look upon theſe prieſts, not only as the cunningeſt and wiſeſt of mankind,

beware of them, and not to come near the tents of theſe wicked men, leſt they periſh in their deſtruction, both of ſoul and body.

but we ſhall be attempted to adore them as Deities, who have ſuch power as to impoſe at their pleaſure, upon the ſenſes of mankind, to make them believe that they had practiſed ſuch publick inſtitutions, enacted them by laws, taught them to their children, &c. when they had never done any of theſe things, or ever ſo much as heard of them before: and then, upon the credit of their believing that they had done ſuch things as they never did, to make them further believe, upon the ſame foundation, whatever they pleaſed to impoſe upon them, as to former ages: I ſay, ſuch a power as this muſt exceed all that is human; and conſequently make us rank theſe prieſts far above the condition of mortals.

2. Nay, this were to make them outdo all that has ever been related of the infernal powers: for though their legerdemain has extended to deceive ſome unwary beholders, and their power of working ſome ſeeming miracles has been great, yet it never reached nor ever was ſuppoſed to reach ſo far, as to deceive the ſenſes of all mankind, in matters of ſuch public and notorious nature as thoſe of which we now ſpeak, to make them believe, that they had enacted laws for ſuch public obſervances, continually practiſed them, taught them to their children, and had been inſtructed in them themſelves, from their childhood,

childhood, if they had never enacted, practiſed, taught, or been taught ſuch things.

3. And as this exceeds all the power of hell and devils, ſo is it more than ever God Almighty has done ſince the foundation of the world. None of the miracles that he has ſhewn, or belief which he has required to any thing that he has revealed, has ever contradicted the outward ſenſes of any one man in the world, much leſs of all mankind together. For miracles being appeals to our outward ſenſes, if they ſhould overthrow the certainty of our outward ſenſes, muſt deſtroy with it all their own certainty as to us; ſince we have no other way to judge of a miracle exhibited to our ſenſes, than upon the ſuppoſition of the certainty of our ſenſes, upon which we give credit to a miracle, that is ſhewn to our ſenſes.

4. This, by the way, is yet an unanſwered argument againſt the miracle of tranſubſtantiation, and ſhews the weakneſs of the defence which the Church of Rome offers for it, (from whom the Socinians have licked it up, and of late have gloried much in it amongſt us) that the doctrines of the Trinity or Incarnation contain as great ſeeming abſurdities as that of Tranſubſtantiation: for I would aſk, which of our ſenſes it is which the doctrines of the Trinity or Incarnation do contradict? Is it our ſeeing,

hearing, feeling, taſte, or ſmell? Whereas Tranſubſtantiation does contradict all theſe. Therefore the compariſon is exceedingly ſhort, and out of purpoſe. But to return.

If the Chriſtian religion be a cheat, and nothing elſe but the invention of prieſts, and carried on by their craft, it makes their power and wiſdom greater than that of men, angels, or devils; and more than God himſelf ever yet ſhewed or expreſſed, to deceive and impoſe upon the ſenſes of mankind, in ſuch public and notorious matters of fact.

XIV. And this miracle, which the Deiſts muſt run into to avoid theſe recorded of Moſes and Chriſt, is much greater and more aſtoniſhing than all the Scriptures tell of them.

So that theſe men who laugh at all miracles are now obliged to account for the greateſt of all, how the ſenſes of mankind could be impoſed upon in ſuch public matters of fact.

And how then can they make the prieſts the moſt contemptible of all mankind, ſince they make them the ſole authors of this the greateſt of miracles!

XV. And ſince the Deiſts (theſe men of ſenſe and reaſon) have ſo vile and mean an idea of the prieſts of all religions, why do they not recover the world out of the poſſeſſion and government of ſuch blockheads? Why do they ſuffer

ſuffer kings and ſtates to be led by them; to eſtabliſh their deceits by laws, and inflict penalties upon the oppoſers of them? Let the Deiſts try their hands; they have been trying, and are now buſy about it. And free liberty they have. Yet have they not prevailed, nor ever yet did prevail in any civilized or generous nation. And though they have ſome inroads among the Hottentots, and ſome other the moſt brutal part of mankind, yet are they ſtill exploded, and prieſts have and do prevail againſt them, among not only the greateſt, but beſt part of the world, and the moſt glorious for arts, learning, and war.

XVI. For as the devil does ape God, in his inſtitutions of religion, his feaſts, ſacrifices, &c. ſo likewiſe in his prieſts, without whom no religion, whether true or falſe, can ſtand. Falſe religion is but a corruption of the true. The true was before it, though it be followed cloſe upon the heels.

The revelation made to Moſes is elder than any hiſtory extant in the heathen world. The heathens, in imitation of him, pretended likewiſe to their revelations: but I have given thoſe marks which diſtinguiſh them from the true; none of them have thoſe four marks beforementioned.

Now the Deiſts think all revelations to be equally pretended, and a cheat; and the prieſts

of all religions to be the ſame contrivers and jugglers; and therefore they proclaim war equally againſt all, and are equally engaged to bear the brunt of all.

And if the conteſt be only betwixt the Deiſts and the prieſts, which of them are the men of the greateſt parts and ſenſe, let the effects determine it; and let the Deiſts yield the victory to their conquerors, who, by their own confeſſion, carry all the world before them.

XVII. If the Deiſts ſay, that this is becauſe all the world are blockheads, as well as thoſe prieſts who govern them; that all the blockheads except the Deiſts, who vote themſelves only to be men of ſenſe; this (beſides the modeſty of it) will ſpoil their great and beloved topic, in behalf of what they call Natural Religion, againſt the revealed, viz. appealing to the common reaſon of mankind; this they ſet up againſt revelation; think this to be ſufficient for all the uſes of men, here or hereafter, (if there be any after ſtate) and therefore that there is no uſe of revelation: this common reaſon they advance as infallible, at leaſt as the ſureſt guide, yet now cry out upon it, when it turns againſt them; when this common reaſon runs after revelation, (as it always has done) then common reaſon is a beaſt, and we muſt look for reaſon, not from the common ſentiments of mankind, but only among the beaux, the Deiſts.

XVIII. Therefore, if the Deiſts would avoid the mortification (which will be very uneaſy to them) to yield and ſubmit to be ſubdued and hewed down before the prieſts, whom of all mankind they hate and deſpiſe; if they would avoid this, let them confeſs, as the truth is, that religion is no invention of prieſts, but of divine original; that prieſts were inſtituted by the ſame author of religion; and that their order is a perpetual and living monument of the matters of fact of their religion, inſtituted from the time that ſuch matters of fact were ſaid to be done, as the Levites from Moſes, the Apoſtles and ſucceeding Clergy from Chriſt, to this day; that no heathen prieſts can ſay the ſame; they were not appointed by the gods whom they ſerved, but by others in after ages; they cannot ſtand the teſt of the four rules before-mentioned, which the Chriſtian prieſts can do, and they only. Now the Chriſtian prieſthood as inſtituted by Chriſt himſelf, and continued by ſucceſſion to this day, being as impregnable and flagrant a teſtimony to the truth of the matters of fact of Chriſt, as the Sacraments, or any other public inſtitutions; beſides that, if the prieſthood were taken away, the ſacraments and other public inſtitutions, which are adminiſtered by their hands, muſt fall with them: therefore the devil has been moſt buſy, and bent his greateſt

force in all ages againſt the prieſthood, knowing that if that goes down all goes with it.

XIX. With the Deiſts, in this cauſe, are joined the Quakers and other of our Diſſenters, who throw off the ſucceſſion of our prieſthood, (by which only it can be demonſtrated) together with the ſacraments and public feſtivals. And if the devil could have prevailed to have theſe dropt, the Chriſtian religion would loſe the moſt undeniable and demonſtrative proof for the truth of the matter of fact of our Saviour, upon which the truth of his doctrine does depend. Therefore we may ſee the artifice and malice of the devil, in all theſe attempts. And let thoſe wretched inſtruments whom he ignorantly (and ſome by a miſguided zeal) has deluded thus to undetermine Chriſtianity, now at laſt look back and ſee the ſnare in which they have been taken: for if they had prevailed, or ever ſhould, Chriſtianity dies with them. At leaſt it will be rendered precarious, as a thing of which no certain proof can be given. Therefore let thoſe of them who have any zeal for the truth, bleſs God that they have not prevailed: and quickly leave them; and let all others be aware of them.

And let us conſider and honour the prieſthood, ſacraments, and other public inſtitutions of Chriſt, not only as a means of grace and helps to

to devotion, but as the great evidences of the Chriſtian religion.

Such evidences as no pretended revelation ever had, or can have. Such as do plainly diſtinguiſh it from all fooliſh legends and impoſtures whatſoever.

XX. And now, laſt of all, if one word of advice would not be loſt upon men who think ſo unmeaſurably of themſelves as the Deiſts, you may repreſent to them what a condition they are in, who ſpend that life and ſenſe which God has given them, in ridiculing the greateſt of his bleſſings, his revelations of Chriſt, and by Chriſt, to redeem thoſe from eternal miſery, who ſhall believe in him, and obey his laws. And that God, in his wonderful mercy and wiſdom, has ſo guarded his revelations, as that it is paſt the power of men or devils to counterfeit: and that there is no denying of them, unleſs we will be ſo abſurd as to deny not only the reaſon but the certainty of the outward ſenſes, not only of one, or two, or three, but of mankind in general. That this caſe is ſo very plain, that nothing but want of thought can hinder any to diſcover it. That they muſt yield it to be ſo plain, unleſs they can ſhew ſome forgery which has all the four marks before ſet down. But if they cannot do this, they muſt quit their cauſe, and yield a happy victory over themſelves;

ſelves: or elſe ſit down under all that ignominy, with which they have loaded the prieſts, of being, not only the moſt pernicious, but (what will gall them more) the moſt inconſiderate and inconſiderable of mankind.

Therefore, let them not think it an undervaluing of their worthineſs, that their whole cauſe is compriſed within ſo narrow a compaſs: and no more time beſtowed upon it than it is worth.

But let them rather reflect how far they have been all this time from Chriſtianity; whoſe rudiments they are yet to learn! How far from the way of ſalvation! How far the race of their lives is run before they have ſet one ſtep in the road to heaven. And therefore, how much diligence they ought to uſe, to redeem all that time they have loſt, leſt they loſe themſelves for ever; and be convinced, by a dreadful experience, when it is too late, that the Goſpel is a truth, and of the laſt conſequence.

A

LETTER

FROM THE

AUTHOR OF THE SHORT METHOD WITH THE DEISTS.

SIR,

I HAVE read over your papers with great ſatisfaction, and I heartily bleſs God with you, and for you, that he has had mercy upon you, and opened your eyes, to ſee the wondrous things of his law, to convince you of thoſe irrefragable proofs he has afforded for the truth and authority of the Holy Scriptures, ſuch as no other writings upon earth can pretend to, and which are incompatible with any forgery or deceit. He has given you likewiſe that true ſpirit of repentance to bring forth the fruits thereof; that is, to make what ſatisfaction you can for the injuries you have done to religion, by anſwering what has been publiſhed formerly by

by yourſelf againſt it; and being converted, you endeavour to ſtrengthen your brethren.

I. Creation.

You have laid the true foundation of the being of God, againſt the Atheiſt; of his creation of the world, and providence, againſt the aſſerters of blind chance. If all be chance, then their thoughts are ſo too; and there is no reaſoning or argument in the world.

Others, becauſe they know not what to ſay, ſuppoſe the world, and all things in it, to have been from eternity, and to have gone on, as now, in a conſtant ſucceſſion of men begetting men, trees ſpringing from trees, &c. without any beginning.

But if it was always as it is now, then every thing had a beginning, every man, bird, beaſt, tree, &c. And what has a beginning, cannot be without a beginning.

Therefore, as it is evident that nothing can make itſelf, it is equally evident that a ſucceſſion of things made muſt have a beginning. A ſucceſſion of beginnings cannot be without a beginning; for that would be literally a beginning without a beginning, which is a contradiction in terms.

II. Pro-

II. Providence.

And to deny Providence in the firſt cauſe, is the denying of a God: whence we had our providence? For we find we have a providence to forecaſt and contrive how to preſerve and govern that which we make or acquire: therefore there muſt be a providence much more eminently in God, to preſerve and govern all the works which he has made. He that made the eye, does he not ſee? And he who put providence into the heart of man, has he none himſelf?

And the glory of his wiſdom and power ſeems greater to us in the acts of his providence than even in thoſe of creation, eſpecially in his governing the actions of free agents, without taking from them the freedom of their will to do as they liſt, and turning their very evil into good by the almightineſs of his wiſdom. We ſee great part of this every day before our eyes, in his turning the councils of the wiſe into fooliſhneſs, and trapping the wicked in the works of their own hands. This ſtrikes us more ſenſibly, and is nearer to us than the making of a tree or a ſtar; and we feel that over-ruling power in his providence, which we contemplate in his creation.

When

When the ſins of men are increaſed to provoke God to take vengeance, he permits the ſpirit of fury to incline their wills to war and deſtruction of each other, and nation riſes up againſt nation; and when in his mercy he thinks the puniſhment is ſufficient, he calms their rage like the roaring of the ſea, and there is peace. And they are ſo free agents in all this, that they think it is all their own doing; and ſo really it is, though under the unſeen direction of a ſuperior power.

But not only in the public tranſactions of the world his providence is obſervable; there is no man who has taken notice of his own life, but muſt find it as to his very private affairs, a thought ſometimes darting into his mind to rid him out of a difficulty, or ſhew him an advantage, which he could not find in much conſidering before. At other times a man's mind is ſo clouded as if his eyes were ſhut, that he cannot ſee his way. Again, ſeveral events which he thought moſt funeſt, and his utter ruin, he finds afterwards to be much for the beſt, and that he had been undone if that had not happened which he feared. On the other hand, many things which he thought for his great benefit, he has found to be for his hurt. This ſhews a providence which ſees further than we can, and diſpoſes all our actions, though done in the full freedom

freedom of our own will, to what events, either good or bad for us, as he pleaſes.

III. Revelation.

But theſe conſiderations from the creation and providence, though admirable and glorious, are within the oracles of reaſon, and are but earthly things, in compariſon of thoſe heavenly things which God has revealed to man at ſundry times, and in divers manners, and are recorded in the Holy Scriptures, and which otherwiſe it was impoſſible for man to have known. "* For "what man is he that can know the counſel of "God? Or who can think what the will of "the Lord is? For the thoughts of mortal "men are miſerable, and our devices are but "uncertain; for the corruptible body preſſeth "down the ſoul, and the earthly tabernacle "weigheth down the mind that muſeth upon "many things; and hardly do we gueſs aright "at things that are upon earth, and with labour "do we find the things that are before us: but "the things that are in heaven, who hath "ſearched out?"

This then muſt be purely the ſubject of revelation; but when the Deiſt is come thus far,

* Wiſdom ix. 13, 14, 15, 16.

he

he is entered into a wide field; for all religions, Jewiſh, Heathen, Chriſtian, and Mahometan, pretend to revelation for their original.

To clear this point was the deſign of the Short Method with the Deiſts, which gave the firſt opportunity to our converſation.

The Heathen and Mahometan religions not only want thoſe marks (there ſet down) which aſcertain the truth of fact, but their morals and worſhip are impure, and inconſiſtent with the artributes of God; as the indulgence of fornication and uncleanneſs among the Heathen, and their human ſacrifices (moſt abhorrent to the God of holineſs and mercy) and the filthy obſcenity of their very *ſacra*; beſides the great defect of their morals, which knew no ſuch thing as humility, forgiveneſs of injuries, loving their enemies, and returning good for evil.—Some of their philoſophers ſpoke againſt revenging of injuries, as bringing greater injury to ourſelves, or not worth the while; but not upon the account of humanity and love to our brethren, and doing them good, though they did evil to us: and by the word *humilitas*, they meant only a lowneſs and dejection of mind, which is a vice; but they had no notion of it as a virtue, in having a low opinion of one's ſelf, and in honour preferring others before us: this they thought a vice and abjection of ſpirits.

You

You may ſee pride and ſelf-conceit run through all their philoſophy, beſides their principle of increaſing their empire, by conquering other countries who did them no harm, whom they called barbarians.

Into this claſs comes likewiſe the Senſual Paradiſe propoſed by Mahomet, and his principle of propagating his religion by the ſword.

The Jewiſh religion has all the certainty of fact, and its morals are good; but becauſe of the hardneſs of their hearts, they came not up to the primitive purity, as in caſe of polygamy and divorce, wherein our bleſſed Saviour reduces them to the original. That from the beginning it was not ſo; and in ſeveral other caſes mentioned in his Sermon upon the Mount.

Therefore the perfection of morals, and of the true knowledge of God, was reſerved for the Chriſtian religion, which has, in more abundant manner than even the Jewiſh, the infallible marks of the truth of the facts, in the multitude and notoriety of the miracles wrought by our bleſſed Saviour beyond thoſe of Moſes.—Which fully anſwers the objections of the Jews, that Chriſt wrought his miracles by Beelzebub: for then, as he ſaid to them, "By whom do "your children caſt out devils?" Was it by the ſpirit of God, or Beelzebub, that Moſes and the prophets wrought their miracles?

Then

Then from the purity and heavenlineſs of his doctrines, all levelled to deſtroy the kingdom of Satan, thoſe wicked principles and idolatrous worſhip which he had ſet up in the world; the other anſwer of our bleſſed Saviour concludes demonſtratively, of a kingdom divided againſt itſelf; that if Satan caſt out Satan to promote that doctrine which Chriſt taught, we muſt alter our notion of the devil, and ſuppoſe him to be good, and his kingdom muſt then be at an end; which we ſee not yet done, for wickedneſs ſtill reigns in the world.

IV. Object. *as to the* Holy Trinity.

Againſt theſe things reaſon has nothing to object, but then prejudices are raiſed up againſt what is revealed, as being of things that are above our reaſon, and out of its reach; as chiefly the doctrine of the bleſſed Trinity.

In anſwer to which we may conſider, that if ſuch things were not above our reaſon, there needed no revelation of them, but only a bare propoſal of them to our reaſon, made by any body without any authority, and their own evidence would carry them through.

In the next place, we muſt acknowledge that there are many things in the divine nature far out of the reach of our reaſon. That it muſt be

ſo:

ſo: for how can finite comprehend infinite? Who can think what eternity is? A duration without beginning, or ſucceſſion of parts or time! Who can ſo much as imagine or frame any idea of a being, neither made itſelf, nor by any other? Of omnipreſence? Of a boundleſs immenſity? &c.

Yet all this reaſon obliges us to allow, as the neceſſary conſequences of a firſt cauſe.

And where any thing is eſtabliſhed upon the full proof of reaſon, there ten thouſand objections or difficulties, though we cannot anſwer them, are of no force at all to overthrow it.—Nothing can do that, but to refute thoſe reaſons upon which it is eſtabliſhed; till when the truth and certainty of the thing remains unſhaken, though we cannot explain it, nor ſolve the difficulties that ariſes from it.

And if it is ſo, upon the point of reaſon, much more upon that of revelation, where the ſubject matter is above our reaſon, and could never have been found out by it.

All to be done in that caſe is, to ſatisfy ourſelves of the truth of the fact, that ſuch things were revealed of God, and are no impoſture. This is done, as to the Holy Scriptures, by the four marks before-mentioned.

And as to the contradiction alledged in three being one, it is no contradiction, unleſs it be

ſaid,

ſaid, that three are one, in the ſelf-ſame reſpect: for in divers reſpects there is no ſort of difficulty, that one may be three, or three thouſand; as one army may conſiſt of many thouſands, and yet it is but one army: there is but one human nature, and yet there are multitudes of perſons who partake of that nature.

Now it is not ſaid that the three perſons in the divine nature are one perſon, that would be a contradiction: but it is ſaid, that the three perſons are one nature. They are not three and one in the ſame reſpect, they are three as to perſons, and one as to nature. Here is no contradiction.

Again, that may be a contradiction in one nature, which is not ſo in another: for example; it is a contradiction that a man can go two yards or miles as ſoon as one, becauſe two is but one and another one: yet this is no contradiction to light, which can reach a ſtar as ſoon as the top of a chimney; and the ſun darts his rays in one inſtant from heaven to earth: but more than all theſe is the motion of thought, to which no diſtance of place is any interruption; which can arrive at Japan as ſoon as at a yard's diſtance; and can run into the immenſity of poſſibilities.

Now there are no words poſſible, whereby to give any notion or idea of ſight or light to a

man born blind: and conſequently to reconcile the progreſs of ſight or light to him from being an abſolute contradiction; becauſe he can meaſure it no otherwiſe than according to the motion of legs or arms, for he knows none other; therefore we cannot charge that as a contradiction in one nature, which is ſo in another, unleſs we underſtand both natures perfectly well; and therefore we cannot charge that as contradiction in the incomprehenſible nature of being three in one, though we found it to be ſo in our nature; which we do not, becauſe, as beforeſaid, they are not three and one in the ſame reſpect.

Now, let us further conſider, that though there is no compariſon between finite and infinite, yet we have nearer reſemblances of the three and one in God, than their is of ſight to a man born blind. For there is nothing in any of the other four ſenſes that has any reſemblance at all to that of ſeeing, or that can give ſuch a man any notion whatever of it.

But we find in our own nature, which is ſaid to be made after the image of God, a very near reſemblance of his Holy Trinity, and of the different operations of each of the Divine Perſons.

For example: to know a thing preſent, and to remember what is paſt, and to love or hate,

are different operations of our mind, and performed by different faculties of it. Of theſe, the underſtanding is the father faculty, and gives being to things, as to us; for what we know not, is to us as if it were not. This anſwers to creation. From this faculty proceeds the ſecond, that of memory, which is a preſerving of what the underſtanding has created to us. Then the third faculty, that of the will, which loves or hates, proceeds from both the other; for we cannot love or hate what is not firſt created by the underſtanding, and preſerved to us by the memory.

And though theſe are different faculties, and their operations different, that the ſecond proceeds from the firſt, or is begotten by it; and the third proceeds from the firſt and ſecond in conjunction, ſo that one is before the other in order of nature, yet not in time; for they are all congenial, and one is as ſoon in the ſoul as the other; and yet they make not three ſouls, but one ſoul. And though their operations are different, and the one proceeds from the other, yet no one can act without the other, and they all concur to every act of each; for in underſtanding and remembering, there is a concurrent act of the will to conſent to ſuch underſtanding or remembering, ſo that no one can act without the other; in which ſenſe none is before or after the

the other, nor can any of them be or exiſt without the other.

But what we call faculties in the ſoul, we call perſons in the Godhead: becauſe there are perſonal actions attributed to each of them: as that of ſending, and being ſent; to take fleſh, and be born, &c.

And we have no other word whereby to expreſs it; we ſpeak it after the manner of men; nor could we underſtand, if we heard any of thoſe unſpeakable words, which expreſs the Divine Nature in his proper eſſence; therefore we muſt make allowances, and great ones, when we apply words of our nature to the infinite and eternal Being. We muſt not argue ſtrictly and philoſophically from them, more than from God's being ſaid to repent, to be angry, &c. They are words *ad captum*, in condeſcenſion to our weak capacities, and without which we could not underſtand.

But this I ſay, that there are nearer reſemblances afforded to us of this ineffable myſtery of the Holy Trinity, than there is betwixt one of our outward ſenſes and another, than there is to a blind man of colours, or of the motion of light or ſight: and a contradiction in the one will not infer a contradiction in the other; though it is impoſſible to be ſolved, as in the

inſtance before given of a man born blind, till we come to know both natures diſtinctly.

And if we had not the experience of the different faculties of our mind, the contradiction would appear irreconcileable to all our philoſophy, how three could be one, each diſtinct from the other, yet but one ſoul: one proceeding from, or being begot by the other; and yet all coeval, and none before or after the other: and as to the difference betwixt faculties and perſons, ſubſtance and ſubſiſtence, it is a puzzling piece of philoſophy. And though we give not a diſtinct ſubſiſtence to a faculty, it has an exiſtence, and one faculty can no more be another, than one perſon can be another: ſo that the caſe ſeems to be alike in both, as to what concerns our preſent difficulty of three and one; beſides what before is ſaid, that by the word perſon, when applied to God, (for want of a proper word whereby to expreſs it,) we muſt mean ſomething infinitely different from perſonality among men. And therefore from a contradiction in the one (ſuppoſe it granted) we cannot charge a contradiction in the other, unleſs we underſtand it as well as the other: for how elſe can we draw the parallel?

What a vain thing is our philoſophy, when we would meaſure the incomprehenſible nature by it! When we find it non-pluſt in our own nature,

nature, and that in many inſtances. If I am all in one room, is it not a contradiction that, any part of me ſhould be in another room? Yet it was a common ſaying among philoſophers, that the ſoul is all in all, and all in every part of the body: how is the ſame individual ſoul preſent, at one and the ſame time, to actuate the diſtant members of the body, without either multiplication or diviſion of the ſoul? Is there any thing in the body can bear any reſemblance to this, without a manifeſt contradiction? Nay, even as to bodies, is any thing more a ſelf-evident principle, than that the cauſe muſt be before the effect? Yet the light and heat of the ſun are as old as the ſun; and ſuppoſing the ſun to be eternal, they would be as eternal.

And as light and heat are of the nature of the ſun, and as the three faculties before-mentioned are of the nature of the ſoul, ſo that the ſoul could not be a ſoul if it wanted any of them; ſo may we, from ſmall things to great, apprehend without any contradiction, that the three perſons are of the very nature and eſſence of the Deity; and ſo of the ſame ſubſtance with it; and though one proceeding from the other, (as the faculties of the ſoul do, yet that all three are con-ſubſtantial, co-eternal, and of neceſſary exiſtence as God is; for that theſe three are God, and God is theſe three. As underſtand-

ing, memory, and will, are a ſoul; and a ſoul is underſtanding, memory, and will.

I intend (God willing) to treat of this ſubject more largely by itſelf; but I have ſaid thus much here, to clear the way from that objection of rejecting revelation (though we are infallibly ſure of the fact) becauſe of the ſuppoſed contradiction to our reaſon, in comparing it with our earthly things.

V. *Of the Difference among Chriſtians.*

But now that from all the proofs of the certainty of the revelation we are come to fix in Chriſtianity, our labour is not yet at an end: for here you ſee multiplicity of ſects and diviſions, which our bleſſed Saviour foretold ſhould come, for the probation of the elect: as ſome Canaanites were left in the land to teach the Iſraelites the uſe of war, leſt by too profound a peace, they might grow lazy and ſtupid, and become an eaſy prey to their enemies. So might Chriſtianity be loſt among us: if we had nothing to do, it would dwindle and decay, and corrupt by degrees, as water ſtagnates by ſtanding ſtill: but when we are put to contend earneſtly for the faith, it quickens our zeal, keeps us upon our guard, trims our lamp, and furbiſhes the ſword of

of the ſpirit, which might otherwiſe ruſt in its ſcabbard. And it gives great opportunity to ſhew us the wonderful providence and protection of God over his church, in preſerving her againſt a viſibly unequal force. And in this conteſt, to ſome this high privilege is granted in the behalf of Chriſt, not only to believe on him, but alſo ſuffer for his ſake*. Theſe go to make up the noble army of martyrs and confeſſors, for ever triumphant in heaven. Others conquer even here on earth, that God's wonderful doings may be known to the children of men.

But as he who builds a tower, ought firſt to compute the expence, and he who goes to war to conſider his ſtrength; ſo our bleſſed Saviour has inſtructed us, that he who will be his diſciple, muſt reſolve beforehand to take up his croſs daily, to forſake father and mother, and wife and children, and lands and life itſelf, when he cannot keep them with the truth and ſincerity of the Goſpel. Therefore we muſt put on the "whole armour of God, that we may be "able to ſtand in the evil day, and having over-"come all, to ſtand; for we wreſtle not againſt "fleſh and blood, but againſt principalities, "againſt powers, againſt the rulers of the dark-

* Phil. i. 29.

" neſs of this world, againſt wicked ſpirits in " high places."

And what is it we wreſtle for?. For the great myſtery of godlineſs, God manifeſt in the fleſh, &c.

VI. *The Doctrine of* SATISFACTION.

Here is the foundation of the Chriſtian religion, that when man had ſinned, and was utterly unable to make any ſatisfaction for his ſin, God ſent his own Son to take upon him our fleſh, and in the ſame nature that offended, to make full ſatisfaction for the ſins of the whole world, by his perfect obedience, and the ſacrifice of himſelf upon the croſs.

Some ſay, what need any ſatisfaction? Might not God forgive without it? It would ſhew greater mercy. But theſe men conſider not that God is not only juſt, but he is juſtice itſelf; juſtice in the abſtract; he is eſſential juſtice. And juſtice, by its nature, muſt exact to the utmoſt farthing, elſe it were not juſtice; to remit is mercy, it is not juſtice; and the attributes of God muſt not fight and oppoſe each other: they muſt all ſtand infinite and complete. You may ſay then, how can God forgive at all? How can infinite mercy and juſtice ſtand together?

This

This queſtion could never have been anſwered, if God himſelf had not ſhewed it to us in the wonderful œconomy of our redemption: for here is his juſtice ſatisfied to the leaſt iota, by the perfect obedience and paſſion of Chriſt, (who is God) in the ſame human nature that offended. Here is infinite wiſdom expreſſed in this means found out for our ſalvation; and infinite mercy in affording it to us. Thus all his attributes are ſatisfied, and filled up to the brim: they contradict not, but exalt each other. His mercy exalts and magnifies his juſtice: his juſtice exalts his mercy, and both his infinite wiſdom.

Here is a view of God, beyond what all the oracles of reaſon could ever have found out, from his works of creation, or common providence! Theſe ſhew his works, but this is his nature, it is himſelf! The very face of God! Before which the angels veil their faces, and deſire to look into this abyſs of goodneſs, and power, and wiſdom, which they will never be able to fathom, but ſtill feed upon, and ſearch farther and farther into it, with adoration, to eternity! And they worſhip our manhood thus taken into God! And rejoice to be miniſtering ſpirits to us, while upon earth.

This you and I have talked over at large; and this I gave you as the ſum and ſubſtance,

the Alpha and Omega, of the Chriſtian religion. And now I repeat it as the ſureſt criterion to guide a man in the difficulty before us, that is, in the choice of a church, in the midſt of all that variety there is among Chriſtians. Whoever hold not this doctrine, join not with them, nor bid them God ſpeed.

VII. *The* SOCINIANS.

This will ſave you from the Socinians, or the Unitarians, as they now call themſelves in England, who expreſsly deny this doctrine: for they deny the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, and the Divinity of Chriſt, upon which it is founded. They conſider Chriſt no otherwiſe than a mere man; and propoſe him only as a teacher and good example to us. But then they are confounded, with all their pretence to wit and reaſon, to give any account for his death, which was not neceſſary to teaching, or being an example: that an angel, or a prophet, might have been. Then they ſay that he died to confirm the truth of his doctrine. But ſet this doctrine of Satisfaction aſide, and he taught nothing new, except the improvement of ſome morals: beſides, dying does not confirm the truth of any doctrine; it only ſhews that he who dies for

it

it does himſelf believe it. Some have died for errors: and the Socinian doctrine affords no comfort, no aſſurance to us. For if we conſider Chriſt only as a teacher or example, we have not followed his precepts nor example: here is nothing but matter of condemnation to us. But if we look upon him as our ſurety, who has paid our debt, as our ſacrifice, atonement, and propitiation for our ſins, and that we are ſaved by his blood, (which is the language of the Holy Scriptures, of which the Socinians know no meaning) this is a rock and infallible aſſurance.

VIII. *The Church of* Rome.

As the Socinians have totally rejected this doctrine, ſo the Church of Rome has greatly vitiated and depreſſed it, by their doctrine of merit, and their own ſatisfaction, which they make part of their ſacrament of penance. On this is founded their purgatory, wherein ſouls who had not made full ſatisfaction upon earth, muſt complete it there. They deny not the Satisfaction of Chriſt, but join their own with it, as if it were not ſufficient.

IX. *The* Dissenters.

On the other hand, our Diſſenters run to the contrary extreme: and becauſe our good works muſt have no ſhare in the ſatisfaction for ſin, which they cannot, as being unworthy, and mixed with our infirmities and our ſin; therefore they make them not neceſſary, nor of any effect towards our ſalvation. They ſay that Chriſt did not die for any but the elect, in whom he ſees no ſin, let them live never ſo wickedly. They damn the far greateſt part of the world by irreverſible decrees of reprobation, and ſay, that their good works are hateful to God, and that it is not poſſible in their power to be ſaved, let them believe as they will, and live never ſo religiouſly. They take away free-will in man, and make him a perfect machine. They make God the author of ſin, to create men on purpoſe to damn them; and to puniſh them eternally for not doing what he had made impoſſible for them not to do. They make his promiſes and threatenings to be of no effect, nay, to be a ſort of burleſquing, and inſulting thoſe whom he has made miſerable; which is an hideous blaſphemy!

For

For a ſolution in this matter, both as to faith and works, I refer you to the homilies of faith and ſalvation, and of good works, where you will find the true Chriſtian doctrine ſet forth clearly and ſolidly.

I will not anticipate what you deſign for your ſecond part, by entering into other diſputes there are among Chriſtians; only theſe will be exceeding neceſſary, to ſettle well the notion of the Church of Chriſt, to which all do pretend in various manners.

X. *The true Notion of the* Church.

Firſt, therefore, the church muſt be conſidered not only a ſect, that is, a company of people believing ſuch and ſuch tenets, like the ſeveral ſects of the Heathen Philoſophers; but as a ſociety under government, with governors appointed by Chriſt, inveſted with ſuch powers and authority, to admit into and exclude out of the ſociety, and govern the affairs of the body.

This power was delegated by Chriſt to his Apoſtles and their ſucceſſors to the end of the world: accordingly the Apoſtles did ordain Biſhops in all the churches which they planted throughout the whole world, as the ſupreme governors,

governors, and center of unity, each in his own church. Theſe were obliged to keep unity and communion with one another; which is therefore called Catholic Communion. And all theſe churches conſidered together, is the Catholic Church: as the ſeveral nations of the earth are called the world.

XI. *Of an* Universal Bishop.

And Chriſt appointed no Univerſal Biſhop over his church more than an Univerſal Monarch over the world. No ſuch thing was known in the primitive church, till it was ſet up firſt by John, Biſhop of Conſtantinople, then by the Biſhop of Rome in the ſeventh century. And as the whole world is one kingdom to God, as it is written, "his kingdom ruleth over all," ſo the ſeveral churches of the world are one church to Chriſt. And the church of Rome's ſaying that ſhe is that one church, or ſhew us another, which can diſpute it with us, in univerſality, antiquity, &c. is the ſame as if France (for example) ſhould ſay, who can compare with me? Therefore I am the Univerſal Monarch, or ſhew me another. The thing appears ridiculous at the firſt propoſal; for it muſt be ſaid to Rome, or to France, that

if

if you were ten times greater than you are, you are yet but a part of the whole. And to ſay, who elſe pretends to it? Why none. And it would be nonſenſe in any one who did pretend to it. One part may be bigger than another; but one part can never be the whole. And all reſults in this, whether Chriſt did appoint an Univerſal Biſhop over all the churches in the world? And we are willing to leave the iſſue to that, if it can appear either from the Scripture or antiquity. Beſides, the reaſon of the thing; for as Gregory the Great urged againſt John, of Conſtantinople, if there was an Univerſal Biſhop, the Univerſal Church muſt fall, if that one Univerſal Biſhop fell; and ſo all muſt come to center in one poor, fallible, mortal man.

This obliged the Pope to run into another monſtrous extreme, and ſet up for infallibility in his own perſon, as the only ſucceſſor of St. Peter, and heir of thoſe promiſes made to him, *ſuper hanc petram, &c.* This was the current doctrine of the divines in the Church of Rome, in former ages, as you may ſee in Bellarmin, *de Rom. Pontif. l.* 4. *c.* 5. where he carries this ſo high as to aſſert, that if the Pope did command the practice of vice, and forbid virtue, the church were bound to believe that virtue was vice, and that vice was virtue. And in his preface

preface he calls this abſolute ſupremacy of the Pope, the *ſumma rei Chriſtianæ*, the ſum and foundation of the Chriſtian religion. And that to deny it was not only a ſimple error, but a pernicious hereſy.

This was old Popery: but now it is generally decried by the Papiſts themſelves; yet no Pope has been brought to renounce it, they will not quit claim.

When they departed from the infallibility of the Pope, they ſought to place it in their General Councils: but theſe are not always in being; and ſo their infallibility muſt drop for ſeveral ages together; which will not conſiſt with their argument, that God is obliged by his goodneſs, to afford always an outward and living judge and guide to his church. Beſides, that inſtances are found, where thoſe councils they call general, have contradicted one another.

For which reaſons, others of them place the infallibility in the church diffuſive: but this upon their ſcheme is indefinite, and the judge of controverſy muſt be ſought among numberleſs individuals, of whom no one is the judge or guide.

XII. *Of* INFALLIBILITY *in the Church.*

But there is an infallibility in the church, not perſonal in any one or all of Chriſtians put together; for millions of fallibles can never make an infallible. But the infallibility conſiſts in the nature of the evidence, which having all the four marks mentioned in the Short Method with the Deiſts, cannot poſſibly be falſe. As you and I believe there is ſuch a town as Conſtantinople, that there was ſuch a man as Henry VIII, as much as if we had ſeen them with our eyes: not from the credit of any hiſtorian or traveller, all of whom are fallible; but from the nature of the evidence, wherein it is impoſſible for men to have conſpired and carried it on without contradiction, if it were falſe.

Thus, whatever doctrine has been taught in the church (according to the rule of Vincentius Lirinenſis) *ſemper, ubique, & ab omnibus*, is the Chriſtian doctrine; for in this caſe, ſuch doctrine is a fact, and having the foreſaid marks, muſt be a true fact, viz. that ſuch doctrine was ſo taught and received.

This was the method taken in the council called at Alexandria againſt Arius; it was aſked by Alexander, the Archbiſhop, who preſided,

Quis

Quis unquam talia audivit *?" Who ever heard of this doctrine before? And it being anſwered by all the Biſhops there aſſembled in the negative, it was concluded a novel doctrine, and contrary to what had been univerſally received in the Chriſtian church. Thus every doctrine may be reduced to fact: for it is purely fact, whether ſuch doctrine was received or not.

And a council aſſembled upon ſuch an occaſion, ſtand as evidences of the fact, not as judges of the faith; which they cannot alter by their votes or authority.

A council has authority in matters of diſcipline in the church; but in matters of faith, what is called their authority, is their atteſtation to the truth of fact; which if it has the marks beforementioned, muſt be infallibly true: not from the infallibility of any or all of the perſons, but from the nature of the evidence, as before is ſaid.

And this is the ſureſt rule, whereby to judge of doctrines, and to know what the Catholick church has believed and taught as received from the Apoſtles.

And they who refuſe to be tried by this rule, who ſay, we care not what was believed by the Catholick church, either in former ages or now; we think our own interpretations or criticiſms

* Socrates, Hiſt. l. 1. c. 5, Gr.

upon

upon ſuch a text, of as great authority as theirs; theſe are juſtly to be ſuſpected, nay, it is evident that they are broaching ſome novel doctrines, which cannot ſtand this teſt. Beſides the monſtrous arrogance in ſuch a pretence, theſe overthrow the foundation of that ſure and infallible evidence upon which Chriſtianity itſelf does ſtand; and reduce all to a blind enthuſiaſm.

XIII. *Of* Episcopacy.

But further, Sir, in your ſearch after a church, you muſt not only conſider the doctrine, but the government; that is, as I ſaid before, you muſt conſider the church, not only as a ſect, but as a ſociety: for though every ſociety founded upon the belief of ſuch tenets, may be called a ſect, yet every ſect is not a ſociety. Now, a ſociety cannot be without government, for it is that which makes a ſociety: and a government cannot be without governors. The Apoſtles were inſtituted by Chriſt, the firſt governors of his church; and with them and their ſucceſſors he has promiſed to be to the end of the world. The Apoſtles did ordain Biſhops as governors in all the churches which they planted throughout the whole world; and theſe Biſhops were eſteemed the ſucceſſors of the Apoſtles each in his own church,

church, from the beginning to this day. This was the current notion and language of antiquity; *Omnes Apoſtolorum ſucceſſores ſunt.* That all Biſhops were the ſucceſſors of the Apoſtles, as St. Jerome ſpeaks, *Epiſt. ad Evagr.* And St. Ignatius, who was conſtituted by the Apoſtles Biſhop of Antioch, ſalutes the church of the Trallians, Ἐν τῳ πληρώματι ἐν Ἀποστολικῷ χαρακτῆρι; *in the plenitude of the Apoſtolical character.* Thus it continued from the days of the Apoſtles to thoſe of John Calvin; in all which time there was not any one church in the whole Chriſtian world that was not epiſcopal. But now it is ſaid by our Diſſenters, that there is no need of ſucceſſion from the Apoſtles, or thoſe Biſhops inſtituted by them: that they can make governors over themſelves whom they liſt: and what ſignifies the government of the church, ſo the doctrine be pure? But this totally diſſolves the church as a ſociety, the government of which conſiſts in the right and title of the governor. And as the Apoſtle ſays, "No man taketh this "honour to himſelf, but he that is called of God, "as was Aaron *." And the diſpute betwixt him and Korah was not as to any point either of doctrine or worſhip, but merely upon that of church government. And St. Jude, ver. 11,

* Heb. v. 4.

brings

brings down the ſame caſe to that of the church. And reaſon carries it as to all ſocieties. They who will not obey the lawful governor, but ſet up another in oppoſition to him, are no longer of the ſociety, but enemies to it, and juſtly forfeit all the rights and privileges of it.

Now conſidering that all the promiſes in the Goſpel are made to the church, what a dreadful thing muſt it be to be excluded from all theſe!

Beſides, the church is called the pillar and ground of the truth, as being a ſociety inſtituted by Chriſt, for the ſupport and preſervation of the faith. This no particular church can attribute to itſelf, otherwiſe than as being a part of the whole: and therefore, as St. Cyprian ſays, "Chriſt made the college of Biſhops "numerous, that if one proved heretical, or "ſought to devour the flock, the reſt might in-"terpoſe for the ſaving of it." This is equally againſt letting the whole depend upon one Univerſal Biſhop; and againſt throwing off the whole epiſcopate, that is, all the Biſhops in the world; which would be a total diſſolution of the church as a ſociety, by leaving no governors in it; or, which is the ſame, ſetting up governors of our own head, without any authority or ſucceſſion from the Apoſtles; which is rendering the whole precarious, and without any foundation. And it is a ſuppoſing that Providence is more

more obliged to ſtand by a church ſet up in direct oppoſition to his inſtitution, than by that church which Chriſt himſelf has founded, and promiſed to be with it to the end of the world. And though he has permitted errors and hereſies to overſpread ſeveral parts of it, at ſeveral times, for the probation of the elect, like the waining of the moon, yet has he not left himſelf without witneſs, and has reſtored light to her, purſuant to his promiſe, that the gates of hell ſhould not prevail againſt her: and this by the means of his ſervants and ſubſtitutes, the Biſhops of his church, whom he has not deſerted. All of whom, through the whole world always did, and ſtill do maintain and own the Apoſtolic Creed. And wherein ſome, as the Arians, have perverted the ſenſe of ſome articles, that laſted but a ſhort time; and the truth has been more confirmed by it, in the unanimous conſent and teſtimony of the whole epiſcopal college, to the primitive doctrine which they have received from the beginning. God healed theſe hereſies in his own way, by the Biſhops and Governors of his church, whom he had appointed, and without any infraction upon his own inſtitution.

And it is obſervable that theſe hereſies began by infraction, which men made upon his inſtitution of Biſhops, as Arius, an ambitious preſbyter, firſt roſe up againſt his Biſhop, before he

was

was given up to that vile hereſy, which he vented afterwards by degrees, to gain a party after him, thereby to maintain the oppoſition which he had made againſt his Biſhop: and, by a laſt judgment, he fell from one error to another, till at laſt he completed that deteſtable hereſy which bears his name.

And in all the annals of the church, whether under the law or the goſpel, there is not one inſtance of a ſchiſm againſt the prieſthood which God had appointed; but great errors in doctrine and worſhip did follow it. Thus the prieſthood which Micah ſet up of his own head, and that which Jeroboam ſet up in oppoſition to that of Aaron, both ended in idolatry. Thus the novations and Donatiſts, who made ſchiſms againſt their Biſhops, fell into grievous errors, though they did not renounce the faith.

And into what groſs errors, both as to doctrine and worſhip, has the church of Rome fallen, ſince her Biſhop ſet up for univerſality, and thereby commenced that grand ſchiſm againſt all the Biſhops of the earth, whom he ſought to depreſs under him; but while he would thruſt other churches from him, he thruſt himſelf from the Catholic church.

What hydra hereſies, and monſtrous ſects, (fifty or ſixty at one time, of which we have the names) flowed like a torrent into England, in the

the times of forty one, after epiſcopacy was thrown down!

So evident is that ſaying, that the church is the pillar and ground of the truth, that we can hardly find any error which has come into the church, but upon an infraction made upon the epiſcopal authority.

XIV. *An infallible Demonſtration of Epiſcopacy.*

For which this is to be ſaid, that it has all the four marks before-mentioned, to aſcertain any fact, in the concurrent teſtimony of all churches, at all times; and therefore muſt infallibly be the government which the Apoſtles left upon the earth. To which we muſt adhere till a greater authority than theirs ſhall alter it.

I doubt not but that all this will determine you to the Church of England, and keep you firm to epiſcopacy, as a matter not indifferent.

And I pray God, that "he who hath begun a "good work in you, may perfect it until the "day of Jeſus Chriſt. Amen."

FINIS.

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THE

Truth of Chriſtianity

DEMONSTRATED,

IN A

DIALOGUE

BETWIXT A

CHRISTIAN AND A DEIST;

Wherein the Caſe of the JEWS is likewiſe conſidered.

BY THE LATE

REV. CHARLES LESLIE, M.A.

A NEW EDITION,

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ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE

PRESENT EDITION.

The following Piece may be conſidered as a Sequel to A SHORT AND EASY METHOD WITH THE DEISTS, *by the ſame Author, lately republiſhed by Deſire of* The Society for promoting Chriſtian Knowledge; *with a* PREFACE, *by the Rev.* W. JONES, M.A. *Author of* "*The Catholick Doctrine of the Trinity*," *&c.*

THE

TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY

DEMONSTRATED.

(1.) CHRISTIAN.

IT is ſtrange you ſhould ſtand it out ſo againſt your own happineſs, and employ your whole wit and ſkill to work in yourſelf a diſbelief of any future rewards or puniſhments, only that you may live eaſy (as you think) in this world, and enjoy your pleaſures. Which yet you cannot enjoy free and undiſturbed from the fear of thoſe things that are to come, the event of which you pretend not to be ſure of; and therefore are ſure of a life full of trouble, that admits not of any conſolation, and of a miſerable and wretched death, according to the utmoſt that you yourſelf propoſe.

DEIST. How can you ſay that, when I propoſe to live without any fear of thoſe things? I fear not hell, and I have diſcarded the expectation of heaven, becauſe I believe neither.

CHR. Are you ſure there are no ſuch things?

DE. That is a negative, and I pretend not to prove it.

CHR. Then you muſt remain in a doubt of it. And what a condition it is to die in this doubt, when the iſſue is eternal miſery! And this is the utmoſt, by your own confeſſion, that you can propoſe to yourſelf. Therefore I called yours a diſbelief, rather than a belief of any thing. It is we Chriſtians who believe, you Deiſts only diſbelieve.

And if the event ſhould prove as you would have it, and that we ſhould all be annihilated at our death, we ſhould be in as good a condition as you. But on the other ſide, if the event ſhould prove as we expect it, then you are eternally miſerable, and we eternally happy. Therefore one would think it the wiſeſt part to take our ſide of the queſtion; eſpecially conſidering that thoſe poor pleaſures, for the ſake of which you determine yourſelves againſt us, are but mere amuſements, and no real enjoyments. Nay, we had better be without them than have them, even as to this life itſelf. Is not temperance and a healthful conſtitution more

pleaſant

pleaſant than thoſe pains and aches, ſick head and ſtomach, that are inſeparable companions of debauchery and exceſs, beſides the clouding our reaſon, and turning ſottiſh in our underſtanding?

DE. We take pleaſure in them for the time, and mind not the conſequences.—But however, a man cannot believe as he pleaſes. And therefore, notwithſtanding all the glorious and terrible things which you ſpeak of, it makes nothing to me, unleſs you can evidently prove them to be ſo. And you muſt ſtill leave me to judge for myſelf, after you have done all you can.

CHR. What I have ſaid, is only to diſpoſe you to hear me impartially, and not to be prejudiced againſt your own happineſs, both here and hereafter.

(2.) DE. Well, without more prefacing, the caſe is this: I believe a God, as well as you; but for revelation, and what you call the Holy Scriptures, I may think they were wrote by pious and good men, who might take this method of ſpeaking, as from God, and in his name, as ſuppoſing that thoſe good thoughts came from Him, and that it would have a greater effect upon the people; and might couch their morals under hiſtories of things ſuppoſed to be done, as ſeveral of the wiſe Heathens have

taken this courſe, in what they told of Jupiter and Juno, and the reſt of their gods and goddeſſes. But as to the facts themſelves, I believe the one no more than the other; or that all the facts in Ovid's Metamorphoſes, or in Æſop's Fables, were true.

CHR. You ſeem willing by this to preſerve a reſpectful eſteem and value for the Holy Scriptures, as being wrote by pious and good men, and with a good deſign to reform the manners of men.

But your argument proves directly againſt the purpoſe for which you brought it, and makes the penmen of the Scriptures to be far from good men, to be not only cheats and impoſtors, but blaſphemers, and an abomination before God. For ſuch the ſame Scriptures frequently call thoſe who preſume to ſpeak as from God, and in his name, when he had not ſent them, and given them authority ſo to do. And the law in the Scriptures condemns ſuch to be ſtoned to death as blaſphemers.

It was not ſo with the Heathens, their moraliſts did not uſe the ſtyle of "Thus ſaith the "Lord;" and their philoſophers oppoſed and wrote againſt one another without any offence. For all the matter was which of them could reaſon beſt; they pretended to no more.

And for the facts of the fables of their gods, themſelves

themſelves did not believe them, and have wrote the mythology or moral that was intended by them.

De. But many of the common people did believe the facts themſelves. As it is with the common people now in the church of Rome, who believe the moſt ſenſeleſs and ridiculous ſtories in their books of legends to be as true as the Goſpel; though the more wiſe among them call them only pious frauds, to encreaſe the devotion of the people. And ſo we think of your Goſpel itſelf, and all the other books you ſay were wrote by men divinely inſpired. We will let you keep them to cajole the mob, but when you would impoſe them upon men of ſenſe, we muſt come to the teſt with you.

Chr. That is what I deſire; and to ſee whether there are no more evidences to be given for the truth of Chriſtianity, that is, of the Holy Scriptures, than are given for the legends, and all the fabulous ſtories of the Heathen gods. And if ſo, I will give up my argument, and confeſs that it is not in my power to convince you.

De. I cannot refuſe to join iſſue with you upon this. To begin, then, I deſire to know your evidences for the truth of your Scriptures, and the facts therein related.

(3.) CHR. If the truth of the book, and the facts therein related be proved, I ſuppoſe you will not deny the doctrines to be true.

DE. No: for if I ſaw ſuch miracles with my eyes as are ſaid to have been done by Moſes and Chriſt, I could not think of any greater proof to be given, that ſuch an one was ſent of God. Therefore, if your Bible be true as to the facts, I muſt believe it in the doctrine too. But there are other books which pretend to give us revelations from God, and we muſt know which of theſe is true.

CHR. To diſtinguiſh this book from all others which pretend to give revelations from God, theſe four marks or rules were ſet down.

I. That the facts related be ſuch of which men's outward ſenſes, their eyes and ears, may judge.

[This cuts off enthuſiaſtical pretences to revelation, and opinions which may be propagated in the dark, and like the tares, not known till they are grown up, and the firſt beginning of them not diſcovered.]

II. That theſe facts be done openly in the face of the world.

III. That not only public monuments, but outward inſtitutions and actions ſhould be appointed, and perpetually kept up in memory of them.

IV. That

IV. That theſe inſtitutions to be obſerved ſhould commence from the time that the facts were done; and conſequently that the book wherein theſe facts and inſtitutions are recorded, ſhould be written at the time, and by thoſe who did the facts, or by eye and ear-witneſſes. For that is included in this mark, and is the main part of it; to prevent falſe ſtories being coined in after ages of things done many hundred years before, which none alive can diſprove. Thus Moſes wrote his five books containing his actions and inſtitutions; and thoſe of Chriſt were wrote by his diſciples, who were eye and ear-witneſſes of what they related. And particular care was taken of this, as you may ſee, Acts i. 21, 22, upon chooſing one to ſupply the place of Judas. "Wherefore of theſe men which "have companied with us, all the time that "the Lord Jeſus went in and out among us, "beginning from the baptiſm of John, until "that ſame day that he was taken from us, muſt "one be ordained to be a witneſs with us of "his reſurrection." And St. John begins his firſt Epiſtle thus: "That which was from the "beginning, which we have heard, which we "have ſeen with our eyes, which we have "looked upon, and our hands have handled— "That which we have ſeen and heard declare "we unto you."

I have explained this fourth mark, becauſe the author of the detection, either wilfully or ignorantly, ſeems not to underſtand it. And this alone overthrows all the ſtories he has told, which he would make parallel to the facts of Moſes and of Chriſt; and therefore alledges that they have all theſe four marks. But he muſt begin again, and own that theſe four marks ſtill ſtand an irrefragable proof of the truth of any fact which has them all, till he can produce a book which was wrote by the actors or eye-witneſſes of the facts it relates, and ſhew that ſuch facts, having the other three marks, have been detected to be falſe. Which when he can do, I will give him up theſe four marks as an inſufficient proof, and own I was miſtaken in them. But hitherto they have ſtood the teſt; for he himſelf will not ſay, he has produced any ſuch book in all his detection.

If he ſays that facts may be true, though no ſuch book can be produced for them, and though they have not all the aforeſaid marks, I will eaſily grant it. But all I contend for is, that whatever has all theſe four marks, cannot be falſe. For example; could Moſes have perſuaded ſix hundred thouſand men that he had led them through the ſea in the manner related in Exodus, if it had not been true? If he could, it would have been a greater miracle than the other.

other. The like of their being fed forty years in the wilderneſs without bread, by manna rained down to them from heaven. The like of Chriſt's feeding five thouſand at a time with five loaves; and ſo of all the reſt. The two firſt marks ſecure from any cheat or impoſture at the time the facts were done, and the two laſt marks ſecure equally from any impoſition in after ages, becauſe this book, which relates theſe facts ſpeaks of itſelf as written at that time by the actors or eye-witneſſes, and as commanded by God to be carefully kept and preſerved to all generations, and read publicly to all the people, at ſtated times, as is commanded, Deut. xxxi. 10, 11, 12. And was practiſed, Joſh. viii. 34, 35. Neh. viii. &c. And the inſtitutions appointed in this book were to be perpetually obſerved from the day of the inſtitution for ever among theſe people, in memory of the facts, as the paſſover, Exod. xii. and ſo of the reſt. Now ſuppoſe this book to have been forged a thouſand years after Moſes, would not every one ſay when it firſt appeared, we never heard of this book before, we know of no ſuch inſtitutions, as of a paſſover, or circumciſion, or ſabbaths, and the many feaſts and faſts therein appointed, of a tribe of Levi, and a tabernacle wherein they were to ſerve in ſuch an order of Prieſthood, &c. Therefore this book muſt be

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an errant forgery, for it wants all thoſe marks it gives of itſelf, as to its own continuance, and of thoſe inſtitutions it relates. No inſtance can be ſhewn ſince the world began of any book ſo circumſtantiated, that was a forgery, and paſſed as truth upon any people. I think it impoſſible; and therefore that the four marks are ſtill an invincible proof of the truth of that book, and thoſe facts wherein all theſe marks do meet.

But ſince I am come upon this ſubject again, I will endeavour to improve it, and give four other marks, ſome of which no fact, however true, ever had, or can have, but the fact of Chriſt alone. Thus while I ſupport the fact of Moſes, I ſet that of Chriſt above him, as the lord is above the ſervant. And the Jews being herein principally concerned, I will conſider their caſe likewiſe as we go along; therefore I add this fifth mark as peculiar to our Bible, and to diſtinguiſh it from all other hiſtories which relate facts formerly done.

(V.) That the book which relates the facts contains likewiſe the law of that people to whom it belongs, and be their ſtatute-book by which their cauſes are determined. This will make it impoſſible for any to coin or forge ſuch a book, ſo as to make it paſs upon any people. For example; If I ſhould forge a ſtatute book for England, and publiſh it next term, could I make

make all the judges, lawyers, and people believe, that this was their true and only ſtatute-book by which their cauſes had been determined theſe many hundred years paſt? They muſt forget their old ſtatute-book, and believe that this new book, which they never ſaw or heard of before, was that ſame old book which has been pleaded in Weſtminſter-Hall for ſo many ages, which has been ſo often printed, and the originals of which are now kept in the Tower, to be conſulted as there is occaſion.

DE. I grant that to be impoſſible. But how do you apply it?

CHR. It is evident as to the books of Moſes, which are not only a hiſtory of the Jews, but their very ſtatute-book, wherein their municipal law, as well civil as eccleſiaſtical, was contained.

DE. This is ſo indeed as to the books of Moſes, to which they always appealed: "To the law and to the Teſtimony." And they had no other ſtatute-book. But this will not agree to your Goſpel, which is no municipal law, nor any civil law at all, and no civil cauſes were tried by it.

CHR. The law was given to the Jews, as a diſtinct and ſeparate people from all other nations upon the earth; and therefore was a municipal law particularly for that nation only of the Jews.

But

But Chriſtianity was to extend to all the nations of the earth; and Chriſtians were to be gathered out of all nations; and therefore the Goſpel could not be a municipal law as to civil rights to all nations, who had each their own municipal laws. This could not be without deſtroying all the municipal laws in the world, of every nation whatſoever; and then none could be a Chriſtian, without at the ſame time becoming a rebel to the government where he lived. This would have been for Chriſt to have immediately ſet up for univerſal and temporal King of all the world, as the Jews expected of their Meſſiah, and therefore would have made Chriſt a King. But he inſtructed them in the ſpiritual nature of his kingdom, that it was not "of this world," nor did reſpect their temporal or civil matters; which therefore he left in the ſame ſtate he found them, and commanded their obedience to their civil governors, though Heathen, not only for wrath, but alſo for conſcience ſake. And as to the law of Moſes, he left the Jews ſtill under it, as to their civil concerns, ſo far as the Romans under whoſe ſubjection they then were, would permit them. As Pilate ſaid to them, "Ye have a law; and "judge ye him according to your law."

But the Goſpel was given as the ſpiritual and eccleſiaſtical law to the Church whitherſoever diſperſed

diſperſed through all nations; for that did not interfere with their temporal laws, as to civil government. And in this the fifth mark is made ſtronger to the Goſpel than even to the law; for it is eaſier to ſuppoſe that any forgery might creep into the municipal-law of a particular nation, than that all the nations whither Chriſtianity is ſpread ſhould conſpire in the corruption of the Goſpel, which to all Chriſtians is of infinitely greater concern than their temporal laws. And without ſuch a concert of all Chriſtian nations and people ſuppoſed, no ſuch forgery could paſs undiſcovered in the Goſpel, which is ſpread as far as Chriſtianity, and read daily in their public offices.

De. But I ſay it is diſcovered, as appears by the multitude of your various lections.

Chr. That cannot be called a forgery; it is nothing but ſuch miſtakes as may very eaſily happen, and are almoſt unavoidable, in ſo many copies as have been made of the Goſpel, before printing was known. And conſidering the many tranſlations of it into ſeveral languages, where the idioms are different, and phraſes may be miſtaken, together with the natural ſlips of amanuenſes, it is much more wonderful that there are no more various lections, than that there are ſo many.

But in this appears the great providence of God

God in the care the Chriſtians took of this, that they have marked every the leaſt various lection, even ſyllabical: and that among all theſe there is not found one which makes any alteration either in the facts, or in the doctrines. So that inſtead of an objection, this becomes a ſtrong confirmation of the truth and certainty of the Goſpel, which ſtands thus perfectly clear of ſo much as any doubt concerning the facts or the doctrines therein related.

But I will now proceed to a ſtronger evidence than even this, and all that has been ſaid before; which I have made the ſixth mark, and that is the topic of prophecy.

(VI.) The great fact of Chriſt's coming into the world was propheſied of in the Old Teſtament from the beginning to the end, as it is ſaid, Luke i. 70. "By all the holy prophets "which have been ſince the world began."

This evidence no other fact ever had; for there was no prophecy of Moſes, but Moſes himſelf did prophecy of Chriſt, Deut. xviii. 15. (applied Acts iii. 22, 23, 24.) and ſets down the ſeveral promiſes given of him. The firſt was to Adam, immediately after the fall, Gen. iii. 15, where he is called the ſeed of the woman, but not of the man, becauſe he was to have no man for his father, though he had a woman to his mother. And of none other can this be ſaid,

nor

nor that he ſhould "bruiſe the ſerpent's head," that is, overcome the devil and all his power.

He was again promiſed to Abraham, as you may ſee, Gen. xii. 3. xviii. 18. See this applied Gal. iii. 16.

Jacob did expreſsly propheſy of him, with a mark of the time when he ſhould come, and calls him "Shiloh," or "He that was to be "ſent." Gen. xlix. 10.

Balaam propheſied of him by the name of the ſtar of Jacob, and ſceptre of Iſrael. Numb. xxiv. 17.

Daniel calls him the Meſſiah, the Prince; and tells the time of his coming, and of his death, Dan. ix. 25, 26.

It was foretold that he ſhould be born of a virgin, Iſa. vii. 14. In the city of Bethlehem, Micah v. 2. Of the ſeed of Jeſſe, Iſa. xi. 1. 10. His low eſtate and ſufferings are particularly deſcribed, Pſal. xxii. and Iſa. liii. And his reſurrection, Pſal. xvi. 10. That he ſhould ſit upon the throne of David for ever, and be called "Wonderful," the "Mighty God," the "Prince of Peace," Iſa. ix. 6, 7. "The Lord "our righteouſneſs," Jer. xxxiii. 16. Jehovah Tſidkenu, (an incommunicable name given to none but the great God alone.) And Immanuel, that is, "God with us," Iſa. vii. 14. And David whoſe ſon he was, according to the fleſh, called him his lord, Pſal. cx. 1.

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The cauſe of his ſufferings is ſaid to be for the ſins of the people, and not for himſelf, Iſa. liii. 4, 5, 6. Dan. ix. 26.

And as to the time of his coming, it is expreſsly ſaid, (to the confuſion of the Jews now) that it was to be before the ſceptre ſhould depart from Judah, Gen. xlix. 10. In the ſecond temple, Hag. ii. 7, 9. Within ſeventy weeks of the building of it, Dan. ix. 24, that is, (according to the prophetical known ſtile of a day for a year) within four hundred and ninety years after.

(1) From theſe and many more prophecies of the Meſſiah or Chriſt, his coming was the general expectation of the Jews from the beginning, but more eſpecially about the time in which it was foretold he ſhould come, when ſeveral falſe Meſſiahs did appear among them. And this expectation ſtill remains with them, though they confeſs that the time foretold by all the Prophets for his coming, is paſt.

But what I have next to offer will be more ſtrange to you. You may ſay it was natural for the Jews to expect their Meſſiah, who was propheſied of in their book of the law, and was to be a Jew, and King of all the earth. But what had the Gentiles to do with this? There were no prophecies to them.

Therefore what I have to ſhew you is, that

theſe prophecies of the Meſſiah were likewiſe to the Gentiles. For it is ſaid he ſhould be the expectation of the Gentiles, as well as of the Jews. And Gen. xlix. 10. That the gathering of the people (or nations) ſhould be to him. In the vulgar it is rendered *expectatio gentium.* "The expectation of the Gentiles." He is called "the deſire of all nations," Hag. ii. 7. And I will ſhew you the general expectation the Gentiles had of his coming, about the time that he did come.

They knew him by the name of the Eaſt. Their tradition was, that the Eaſt ſhould prevail, *ut valeſceret oriens,* as I will ſhew you preſently. But firſt let me tell you, that the Holy Scripture often alludes to him under this denomination. The blood of the great expiatory ſacrifice was to be ſprinkled towards the Eaſt, Lev. xvi. 14, to ſhew whence the true expiatory ſacrifice ſhould come. And he is thus frequently ſtiled in the Prophets. Zech. iii. 8. It is ſaid, according to the vulgar, "I will "bring forth my ſervant the Eaſt." And chap. vi. 12. "Behold the man whoſe name "is the Eaſt." Our Engliſh renders it in both places the branch, for the Hebrew word bears both ſenſes. But the Greek renders it Ἀνατολὴ, which we tranſlate the "day ſpring," Luke i. 78. and put on the margin ſun-riſing or branch.

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The vulgar has it *oriens ex alto*, the Eaſt or Sun-riſing from on high. He is called the "Sun of righteouſneſs," Mal. iv. 2. And it is ſaid, Iſa. lx. 3. "The Gentiles ſhall come to "thy light, and kings to the brightneſs of thy "riſing."

(2.) Now, Sir, how literally was this fulfilled in the Magi (generally ſuppoſed to be Kings) coming from the Eaſt, led by a ſtar which appeared to them in the Eaſt, to worſhip Chriſt when he was born, and to bring preſents unto him as unto a king? As it is told in the ſecond of St. Matthew.

DE. Why do you quote St. Matthew to me? You know we make no more of him than of one of your legend writers, and believe this ſtory no more than that theſe three kings are now buried at Cologne.

(3.) CHR. You make great uſe of the legends, and anſwer every thing by them; and I confeſs they are the greateſt affront to Chriſtianity, and (if poſſible) a diſproof of it, as it muſt be to thoſe who will place them upon the ſame foot with the Holy Bible, as too many do in the Church of Rome, and cry, we have the authority of the Church for both. And they are taught to receive the Holy Scriptures upon the

the authority of the Church only. But my buſineſs is not with them now; I ſhall only ſay, that when they can bring ſuch evidences for the truth of their legends, or for any particular fact in them, as I do for the Holy Scriptures, and in particular for the fact of Chriſt, then I will believe them.

DE. Will you believe nothing that has not all theſe evidences you produce?

(4.) CHR. Far from it: for then I muſt believe nothing but this ſingle fact of Chriſt: becauſe no other fact in the world, no, not of all thoſe recorded in Holy Scriptures, has all theſe evidences which the fact of Chriſt has. And ſo God has thought fitting, that this great fact above all other facts, of the greateſt glory to God, and importance to mankind, ſhould appear with greater and more undeniable evidence than any other fact ever was in the world.

DE. We are now upon the particular fact of the Magi or wiſe men coming to Chriſt. Have you any more to ſay as to that?

(5.) CHR. It has thoſe ſame evidences that the truth of the Bible in general has, which are more than can be produced for any other book in the world. But now as to this fact in particular, St. Matthew was the firſt who wrote the

Goſpel, and it was in the ſame age when this fact was ſaid to be done. And can you think it poſſible that ſuch a fact as this could have paſſed without contradiction, and a public expoſing of Chriſtianity, then ſo deſirable and ſo much endeavoured by the unbelieving Jews, their high-prieſts, elders, &c. as the only means for their own preſervation, if the fact had not been notorious and freſh in the memory of all the people then at Jeruſalem, viz. that theſe wiſe men came thither, and that Herod and the whole city were troubled at the news they brought of the birth of the King of the Jews; that Herod thereupon gathered all the chief Prieſts and Scribes of the people together, that they might ſearch out of the Prophets, and know the place where Chriſt ſhould be born; and then the ſlaughter of the infants in and about Bethlehem, and in all the coaſts thereof, which followed—I ſay could ſuch a fact as this have paſſed at that very time, if it had not been true? Could St. Matthew have hoped to have palmed this upon all the people, and upon thoſe very ſame chief Prieſts and Scribes who, he ſaid, were ſo far concerned in it? Would none of them have contradicted it, if it had been a forgery? Eſpecially when the detecting it would have ſtrangled Chriſtianity in its birth? Would not they have done it who ſuborned falſe witneſſes

againſt Chriſt, and gave large money to the ſoldiers to conceal (if poſſible) his reſurrection? Would not they have done it, who perſecuted Chriſtianity with all ſpite and fury, and invented all imaginable falſe ſtories and calumnies againſt it? Whereas here was one at hand, this of the Magi, which, if falſe, could have been ſo eaſily detected, by appealing to every man, woman, and child, I may ſay, in Jeruſalem, Bethlehem, and even in all Judea; who, no doubt, had heard of the terrible maſſacre of ſo many infants, and the cauſe of it.

De. I can give no account why the writers againſt Chriſtianity did not offer to contradict this fact of the ſtar and the Magi, which is put in the very front of this Goſpel of St. Matthew. And there it is called his (Chriſt's) ſtar. "We have ſeen his ſtar in the Eaſt."—As if God had created a new and extraordinary ſtar on purpoſe, as the ſignal of Chriſt hung out in the heavens, to give the world notice of his birth. But did none of the heathen Philoſophers take notice of this ſtar, or of his relation given of it by your St. Matthew?

(6.) Chr. Yes. For Chalcidius in his comment upon Plato's Timæus, ſpeaking of the preſages of ſtars mentioned by Plato, adds as a further proof, *Eſt quoque alia venerabilior &*

 ſanction

ſanctior hiſtoria.—There is likewiſe another more venerable and holy hiſtory, by which I doubt not he means this of St. Matthew; for what he tells ſeems to be taken out of it, "That by "the riſing of a certain unuſual ſtar, not plagues "and diſeaſes, but the deſcent of the venerable "God, for the ſalvation and benefit of mortals, "was obſerved by the Chaldeans, who wor-"ſhipped this God newly born, by offering "gifts unto him."

DE. This makes thoſe Magi or wiſe men to have been Chaldeans, who I know were the moſt noted then in the world for the moſt curious learning, particularly in aſtronomy. And they were likewiſe Eaſt of Jeruſalem, ſo that it might be well ſaid they came from the Eaſt, and had ſeen his ſtar in the Eaſt. But I cannot imagine how they ſhould read the birth of a God in the face of a new ſtar: and how that ſtar ſhould ſend them particularly to Jeruſalem, though I may ſuppoſe it pointed them weſtward.

(7.) CHR. This will be eaſier to you, when you know, that all over the Eaſt there was a tradition, or fixed opinion, that about that time a King of the Jews would be born, who ſhould rule the whole earth. And the appearance of this extraordinary ſtar in the Eaſt was taken by them as a ſign that he was then born. And

whither ſhould they go look for the King of the Jews, but to Jeruſalem? And when they came thither they enquired, ſaying, "Where "is he that is born King of the Jews? For we "have ſeen his ſtar in the Eaſt, and are come "to worſhip him." This made Herod gather the Prieſts and Scribes together. And they by ſearching the Prophets found that Bethlehem was the place; whereupon the wiſe men went to Bethlehem; and to convince them that they were right, the ſtar which they had ſeen in the Eaſt appeared to them again, and, "went before "them till it came and ſtood over where the "young child was." This made them "rejoice "with ſuch an exceeding great joy."

De. This would go down in ſome meaſure with me, if you could make good your firſt *poſtulatum*, of ſuch a current tradition or opinion in the Eaſt; but for this you have given no ſort of proof. And all the reſt which you have inferred from thence muſt come to the ground with it, if it be not ſupported. I confeſs it would ſeem as ſtrange to me as the ſtar to the wiſe men, if God had (we know not how, it is unaccountable to us) ſent ſuch a notion into the minds of men, and at that time only, of ſuch a King to be born, and that he ſhould be a Jew, (the then moſt contemptible people in the world, ſubdued and conquered by the Ro-

mans) and that he was to be King of the Jews, and thence to become King of all the earth, and conquer his conquerors. The Romans would have looked with diſdain upon ſuch a notion of prophecy as this; it would have made ſome ſtir among them, if they had heard of it, or given any credit to it.

(8.) CHR. You argue right; and I will ſhew you what ſtir it made among them, and I hope you will take their word, as well for this Eaſtern tradition, as for the effects it had among themſelves. Nay, they wanted not the ſame tradition among themſelves, and expreſs prophecies of it in their Sibyls, and otherwiſe. So that the ſame expectation of the Meſſiah was then current over all the earth, with the Gentiles as well as with the Jews.

Tacitus in his Hiſtory, l. v. c. 13. ſpeaking of the great prodigies that preceded the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, ſays that many underſtood theſe as the forerunners of that extraordinary Perſon whom the ancient books of the Prieſts did foretel ſhould come about that time from Judea, and obtain the univerſal dominion; his words are, "*Pluribus perſuaſio inerat, antiquis ſacerdotum literis contineri, eo ipſo tempore fore, ut valeſceret* Oriens, *profectique* Judæa *rerum potirentur*:" i. e. "Many were perſuaded that

that it was contained in the old writings of the Prieſts, that at that very time the Eaſt ſhould prevail, and the Jews ſhould have the dominion." And Suetonius in the Life of Veſpaſian, c. i. n. 4. ſays, "*Percrebuerat* Oriente *toto vetus & conſtans opinio, eſſe in fatis, ut eo tempore,* Judæa *profecti rerum potirentur;*" i. e. "That it was an ancient and conſtant opinion (or tradition) throughout the whole Eaſt, that at that time thoſe who came from Judea ſhould obtain the dominion;" that is, ſome Jew ſhould be univerſal king. Therefore Cicero, who was a commonwealths-man, in his ſecond book of Divination, ſpeaking of the books of the Sibyls who likewiſe foretold this great King to come, ſays, "*Cum antiſtibus agamus, & quidvis potius ex illis libris, quam regem proferant: quem Romæ poſt hæc nec Dii, nec homines eſſe patientur;*" i. e.— "Let us deal with theſe Prieſts, and let them bring any thing out of their books, rather than a king: whom neither the Gods nor men will ſuffer after this at Rome."

But he was miſtaken, and had his head cut off for writing againſt kingly government. And others more conſiderable than he laid greater ſtreſs upon theſe prophecies, even the whole Senate of Rome, as I come to ſhew you.

Whether theſe Sibyls gathered their prophecies out of the Old Teſtament, is needleſs here

to examine. I am now only upon that general expectation which was then in the world of this great and univerſal King to come about that time.

(9.) The ſame year that Pompey took Jeruſalem, one of theſe oracles of the Sibyls made a great noiſe, which was, "That nature was about to bring forth a King to the Romans." Which, as Suetonius relates in the Life of Auguſtus, c. 94. did ſo terrify the Senate, that they made a decree to expoſe, that is, deſtroy all the children born that year. *Senatum exterritum cenſuiſſe, ne quis illo anno genitus educaretur.* That none born that year ſhould be brought up, but expoſed, that is, left in ſome wood or deſart place to periſh. But he tells how this dreadful ſentence was prevented. *Eos qui gravidas uxores haberent, quod ad ſe quiſque ſpem traheret, curâſſe ne Senatus conſultum ad ærarium deferretur.* That thoſe Senators whoſe wives were with child, becauſe each was in hopes of having this great King, took care that the decree of the Senate ſhould not be put into the ærarium or treaſury, without which, by their conſtitution, the decree could not be put in execution. And Appian, Plutarch, Salluſt, and Cicero, do all ſay, that it was this prophecy of the Sibyls which raised the ambition of Corn. Lentulus

tulus at that time hoping that he ſhould be this King of the Romans. Virgil, a few years before the birth of Chriſt, in his 4th Eclogue, quotes a prophecy of one of theſe Sibyls ſpeaking of an extraordinary perſon to be born about that time, who ſhould introduce a golden age into the world, and reſtore all things, and ſhould blot out our ſins.

——*Si qua manent ſceleris veſtigia noſtri.*

And calls him,

Chara Deûm ſoboles, magnum Jovis incrementum.

Dear offspring of the Gods, and great ſon of Jove.

He deſcribes a new ſtate of things like the "new heavens" and "new earth," Iſa. lxv. 17.

Magnus ab integro ſeclorum naſcitur ordo.

A great order of ages does begin, wholly new.

And as Iſaiah deſcribes the happy ſtate in the "new earth," that "the lion and the lamb ſhould feed together, the ſerpent eat duſt, and that they ſhould not hurt or deſtroy in all the holy mountain," Iſai. lxv. 25. Virgil does almoſt repeat his words:

——Nec magnos metuent armenta leones.
Occidet & ſerpens, & fallax herba veneni
Occidet.——

And as God introduces the Meſſiah with ſaying, "I will ſhake the heavens, and the earth, and the ſea," Hag. ii. 7. Virgil does in a manner tranſlate it in this Eclogue, introducing the great perſon then to be born, and the joy which ſhould be in the whole creation.

Aſpice convexo nutantem pondere mundum,
Terraſq; tractuſq; maris, cælumq; profundum.
Aſpice venturo lætentur ut omnia ſeclo.

Lo! teeming nature bending with its load,
The earth, the ocean, and the heavens high,
Behold how all rejoice to greet the coming age.

Here the poet deſcribes nature as in labour to bring forth this great King, as the other Prophecy of the Sibyls before-mentioned ſpeaks. And he ſays, *Aderit jam tempus.* That the time was then at hand.

Jam nova progenies cælo demittitur alto.

Now a new progeny from heaven deſcends.

And he applies it to Saloninus, the ſon of Polli the conſul, then newly born, as if it was to be fulfilled

fulfilled in him. But as there was nothing lik it in the event; ſo theſe words are too great to be applied to any mortal, or the reign of any King that ever was in the world; or to any other but to the Meſſiah, the Lord of heaven and earth.

(10.) De. But you know the authority of theſe Sibyls is diſputed. Some ſay the Chriſtians did interpolate them, and added to them in about a hundred years after Chriſt.

Chr. It is true, the Chriſtians did often quote them againſt the Heathens, as St. Paul quoted the Heathen Poets to the Athenians, Acts xvii. 28. And Clem Alexandrinus in his Strom. l. 6. ſays, that St. Paul quoted the Sibyls likewiſe in his Diſputations with the Gentiles. And the Chriſtians were called Sibyllianiſts, from their quoting the Sibyls ſo often. But Origen, in his anſwer to Celſus, l. 7. challenges him to ſhew any interpolation made by the Chriſtians, and appeals to the Heathen copies which were in their own poſſeſſion, and kept with great care.

But what I have quoted to you out of Virgil was before Chriſt was born, and therefore clear of all theſe objections.

De. Then the Jews muſt have had ſome hand in them. As likewiſe in that Eaſtern tradition you have ſpoken of.

CHR. If ſo, you muſt ſuppoſe that the Jews had it from their own Prophets. And this will be a ſtrong confirmation that the time of the Meſſiah's coming as plainly told in the prophets.

(11.) DE. What ſay the Jews to this? For I cannot imagine how they can get off of it.

CHR. Some of them ſay, that the Meſſiah put off his coming at the appointed time, becauſe of their ſins. Others ſay, he did come at the time, but has concealed himſelf ever ſince.

DE. Theſe are mere excuſes. Do they pretend any prophecy for this? But to what purpoſe? For theſe excuſes ſhew, that prophecies are no proofs, becauſe if they may be thus put off, they can never be known. And they may be put off and put off to the end of the world.

(12.) CHR. But now, Sir, as to your point. If this general expectation, both eaſt and weſt, of the great King of the Jews to be born about that very time that he did come, was occaſioned by the Jewiſh tradition of it, ſtrengthens the truth of the Holy Scriptures, whence the Jews had it. But otherwiſe, if God, we know not how, did ſend ſuch a notion into the minds of

men,

men, all over the world, at that particular time, and never the like, either before or ſince, then the miracle will be greater, and the atteſtation to the coming of Chriſt ſtronger, and as you ſaid, it will be more wonderful and more convincing to you, than the ſtar was to the wiſe men in the eaſt.

DE. I muſt take time to anſwer this. I made nothing at all of this of the Magi, and the ſtar, and of Herod's ſlaying the infants upon it. I thought it a ridiculous ſtory, and to have no foundation in the world. But when I ſee Suetonius telling us of the decree of the Senate of Rome to deſtroy all the children born that year, and for the ſame reaſon, for fear of this great King that was then to be born; I muſt think there was a ſtrange chiming in of things here, one to anſwer the other. I know not how it happened. By chance, or how!

(13.) CHR. You cannot imagine there could be any concert in this matter. That the Chaldeans, and Romans, and Jews, ſhould all agree upon the point, and hit it ſo exactly, without any one of them diſcovering the contrivance! eſpecially when it was ſo terrible to both the Romans and the Jews, that they took ſuch deſperate methods to prevent it as to deſtroy their own children!

De. It is ridiculous to talk of a concert. I will not put my cauſe upon that. Would they concert what they thought their own deſtruction? Beſides, the Jews and Romans were then enemies; and the Chaldeans were far off, and had little correſpondence with either of them. And ſuch an univerſal notion could not be concerted. Whole nations could not be truſted with a ſecret. And if they all kept it, and againſt their own intereſt too, it would be as great a miracle as any in your Bible.

(14.) Chr. How much more impoſſible is it to ſuppoſe, that there ſhould be a concert between different ages, between all the ages from Adam downwards, in all thoſe prophecies of the coming of the Meſſiah? How ſhould they know it but by revelation? And would they have all agreed ſo exactly as to the time, place, manner, and other circumſtances, if it had been a forgery contrived by different perſons and in different ages?

(15.) This is an argument which St. Peter thought ſtronger than the conviction even of our outward ſenſes, for having ſet down what he and the other two Apoſtles had both ſeen and heard upon the holy Mount, he adds, "We have "yet a more ſure word (that is, a ſtronger "proof) of prophecy, whereunto ye do well

"to

" to take heed, as unto a light that ſhineth in " a dark place, until the day dawn, and the " day-ſtar ariſe in your hearts." 2 Pet. i. 19.— And he enforces it thus, " For the prophecy " came not in old time by the will of man, but " holy men of God ſpake as they were moved " by the Holy Ghoſt."

De. I will grant his argument ſo far, that it is eaſier to ſuppoſe the ſenſes of three men, or of all the men in the world to be impoſed upon, than that Adam, Abraham, and I had concerted together. But I will not give you my anſwer yet. Have you any more to ſay upon this head of prophecy?

Chr. I need ſay no more till your anſwer comes. For you have granted that this proof is ſtronger than what we ſee with our eyes.

(16.) But that your anſwer may take in all together, I will give you ſomething further. I have ſet down already ſome of the great prophecies of the coming of Chriſt, his ſufferings, death, and reſurrection. But there are others which reach to ſeveral minute circumſtances, ſuch as cannot be applied to any other fact that ever yet happened, and which could not have been foreſeen by any but God; nor were known by the actors who did them, elſe they had not done them. For they would not have fulfilled the

Prophecies

Prophecies that went before of Chriſt, in applying them to him whom they crucified as a falſe Chriſt.

See then how literally ſeveral of theſe Prophecies were fulfilled. As Pſal. lxix. 21.—"They gave me gall to eat and vinegar to "drink." Then read Matt. xxvii. 34. "They "gave him vinegar to drink mingled with "gall." It is ſaid, Pſa. xxii. 16, 17, 18. "They "pierced my hands and my feet—They ſtand "ſtaring and looking upon me. They part my "garments among them, and caſt lots upon "my veſture." As if it had been wrote after John xix. 23, 24. It was merely accidental in the ſoldiers, they would not tear his coat, becauſe it was woven and without ſeam, therefore they caſt lots for it: thus fulfilling this Scripture, without any knowledge of theirs, for they were Roman ſoldiers, and knew nothing of the Scripture. Again it is ſaid, Pſal. xxii. 7, 8. "All "they that ſee me, laugh me to ſcorn; they "ſhoot out their lips and ſhake their heads, "ſaying, He truſted in God that he would de-"liver him: let him deliver him if he will "have him." Compare this with Matt. xxvii. 39, 41, 42, 43. "And they that paſſed by re-"viled him, wagging their heads, and ſaying—"Come down from the croſs. Likewiſe alſo the "chief prieſts mocking him, with the ſcribes and "elders,

" elders, ſaid—He truſted in God, let him de-
" liver him now if he will have him, for he
" ſaid, I am the Son of God." It is ſaid again, Zech. xi. 10. " They ſhall look upon me whom
" they have pierced." His very price was foretold, and how the money ſhould be diſpoſed of, Zech. xi. 13. fulfilled Matt. xxvii. 6, 7. And his riding into Jeruſalem upon an aſs, Zech. ix. 9. which the learned Rabbi Saadia expounds of the Meſſiah. That he ſhould ſuffer with malefactors, Iſai. liii. 12. That his body ſhould not lie ſo long in the grave as to ſee corruption, Pſal. xvi. 10.

Many other circumſtances are told which cannot be applied to any but to Chriſt. I have ſet down theſe few, that you may take them into conſideration when you think fit to give your anſwer as to this head of Prophecies.

And you are to take care to find ſome other fact guarded with Prophecies like this. Or elſe you muſt confeſs that there is no other fact that has ſuch evidence as this.

(17.) But before I leave this head, I muſt mention the Prophecies in our Bible of things yet to come to the end of the world, and of the new heavens and new earth that ſhall ſucceed.

De. Theſe can be no proofs here, becauſe we cannot ſee the fulfilling of them.

CHR. You may believe what is to come, by the fulfilling you have ſeen of what is paſt. But I bring this now to ſhew you, that there is no other law or hiſtory in the world that ſo much as pretends to this, or to know what is to come. This is peculiar to the Holy Bible, as being written from the mouth of God.

You have ſeen how the current of the Prophecies of the Old Teſtament did point at and center in that great event the coming of the Meſſiah.

When he was come, then he told us more plainly of what was to come after him, even to the conſummation of all things. And by what we have ſeen exactly fulfilled of all he told us to this time, we muſt believe what remains yet to come.

(18.) How particularly did he foretel the deſtruction of Jeruſalem and the temple, Matt. xxiv. And that that age ſhould not paſs till it ſhould be fulfilled? And his very expreſſion was literally fulfilled. That there ſhould not be left one ſtone upon another in the temple, for the very foundations of it were ploughed up by Turnus Rufus. See Scaliger's Canon. Iſagog. p. 304.

When Jeruſalem was firſt beſieged it was full of Chriſtians. But the ſiege was raiſed unaccountably

countably and for no reaſon that hiſtory gives. In which time the Chriſtians ſeeing thoſe ſigns come to paſs which Chriſt had foretold would precede its deſtruction, and particularly laying hold of that caution he gave, "Then let them "that are in Judea flee to the mountains", and that in ſuch haſte, as that he that was in the field was not to return (to Jeruſalem) to fetch his garment, or he on the houſe top there to ſtay to take his goods with him; accordingly all the Chriſtians left Jeruſalém, and fled to Pella, a city in the Mountains. And as ſoon as they were all gone, the Romans returned and renewed the ſiege. And ſo it came to paſs, that when Titus ſacked the city there was not one Chriſtian found there, and the deſtruction fell only upon the unbelieving Jews. The others eſcaped, as Lot out of Sodom, by believing the prediction of that ruin.

(19.) Another very remarkable prediction of our bleſſed Lord in that ſame chapter was of the many falſe Chriſts that ſhould come after him; and he warned the Jews not to follow them, for that it would be to their deſtruction. "Behold, "(ſays he, ver. 25.) I have told you before." But they would not believe him; and accordingly it came to paſs. Joſephus in his Antiquities of the Jews, l. xviii. c. 12. l. xx. c. 6. And De Bell.

Bell. Jud. l. vii. c. 31. tells of abundance of theſe falſe Meſſiahs, who appeared before the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, and led the people into the wilderneſs, where they were miſerably deſtroyed. The very thing of which our Saviour cautioned them, ver. 26. "If they ſay unto "you, Behold, he (that is Chriſt) is in the de-"ſert, go not forth." And De Bell. Jud. l. vii. c. 12. Joſephus ſays, that the chief cauſe of their obſtinacy in that war with the Romans, was their expectation of a Meſſiah to come and deliver them, which brought on their ruin, and made them deaf to the offers of Titus, who courted them to peace.

And ſince the deſtruction of Jeruſalem there have been ſo many falſe Meſſiahs, that Johannes à Lent has wrote a hiſtory of them, printed Herbonæ, 1697. Which brings them down as far as the year 1682. And tells the lamentable deſtruction of the Jews in following them.

(20.) But the next Prophecy of our bleſſed Lord which I produce is more remarkable than theſe; and of which you ſee the fulfilling in a great meaſure, viz. That his Goſpel ſhould prevail over all the world, and that the gates of hell ſhould not prevail againſt it: and this told when he was low and deſpiſed, and had but twelve poor fiſhermen for his followers: and

that

that his religion ſhould conquer, not by the ſword, like Mahomet's, but by patient ſuffering, as lambs among wolves. And in this ſtate the church endured moſt terrible perſecutions, when all the rage of hell was let looſe againſt her, for the firſt three hundred years, without any help but from heaven only; till at laſt, by the Divine Providence, the great Emperor of Rome, and other mighty Kings and Princes, without any force or compulſion, did voluntarily and freely ſubmit their ſcepters to Chriſt.

No religion that ever was in the world was ſo begun, ſo propagated, and did ſo prevail: and hence we aſſuredly truſt, that what remains will be fulfilled, of the promiſe of Chriſt to his church in the latter days.

But I ſpeak now only of this Prophecy ſo long beforehand, and when there was ſo little appearance of its coming to paſs ſo far as we have ſeen already.

Let me here remember one particular paſſage foretold by Chriſt concerning the woman, who anointed his body to the burying, that "whereſoever this Goſpel ſhall be preached "throughout the whole world, this alſo that ſhe "hath done ſhall be ſpoken of, for a memorial "of her." Mark xiv. 8, 9. And we ſee how it is ſpoken of to this day.

DE. If this book had been loſt, we had not heard of this Prophecy.

CHR.

CHR. So you may ſay of all the Bible, or of any other book: but Providence has fulfilled this Prophecy by preſerving the book: and it is a prophecy that this book, at leaſt this fact of the woman, ſhould be preſerved for ever, and it may be preſerved though that book were loſt.

(21.) DE. When prophecies are fulfilled, and the events come to paſs, they are plain to every body; but why might they not have been as plain from the beginning? And then there could have been no diſpute about them, as if it had been ſaid, that ſuch a one by name, at ſuch a time, and in ſuch a place, ſhould do ſuch things, &c.

CHR. Becauſe God having given man free will, he does not force men to do any wicked thing: and it would be in the power of wicked men to defeat a Prophecy againſt themſelves, as to the circumſtance of time, place, or the manner of doing the thing.

For example, if the Jews had known that Chriſt had told his Apoſtles he was to be crucified, they would not have done it; they would have ſtoned him as they did St. Stephen; for that was the death appointed by the law for blaſphemy: and they ſeveral times attempted to have ſtoned Chriſt for this, becauſe he ſaid I am the

the Son of God. John viii. 59. x. 31, 32, 33. But crucifixion was a death by the Roman law. Therefore the Jews, to fulfil this Prophecy (but not knowing it) delivered Chriſt to the Romans to be put to death. Yet he told them ſo much of it, that after he was crucified they might know it, as he ſaid to them, John viii. 28.— "When ye have lift up the Son of Man, then "ſhall ye know that I am he." And chap. x. 32, 33. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, "will draw all men unto me. This he ſaid, "ſignifying what death he ſhould die." But they underſtood it not till they had done it; then they knew what the lifting up meant. And chap. xviii. 31, 32. when Pilate would have had them judge him according to their law, which was ſtoning, they were cautious at this time only, and ſaid, "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death;" becauſe they were then under the government of the Romans. But the next words ſhew the deſign of Providence in it, "that "the ſaying of Jeſus might be fulfilled, which "he ſpake, ſignifying what death he ſhould "die." They had no ſuch caution upon them when they ſtoned St. Stephen after this, nor the many times before when they took up ſtones to ſtone the ſame Jeſus.

Then again, the piercing his ſide with the ſpear was no part of the Roman ſentence of execution,

ecution, but happened ſeemingly by mere accident: for the ſentence of the law was to hang upon the croſs till they were dead; but that being the day of preparation for the Sabbath, which began that evening ſoon after Chriſt and the thieves were faſtened to the croſs, before it could be ſuppoſed they were dead, therefore, "that the bodies might not remain upon the "croſs on the Sabbath-day," the Jews beſought Pilate that their legs might be broken (which was no part of the ſentence neither, but done) leſt they ſhould eſcape when taken down. Accordingly the legs of the thieves were broken, for they were yet alive, and the reaſon why they brake not the legs of Chriſt was, becauſe "they ſaw that he was dead already;" but to make ſure, one of the ſoldiers pierced his ſide with a ſpear: little knowing that they were then fulfilling Prophecies, as that a "bone of him "ſhould not be broken." And again, "They "ſhall look on him whom they pierced." As little did the ſoldiers think of it when they were caſting lots upon his veſture: and the chief Prieſts (if they had known it or reflected upon it) would not have upbraided him in the very words that were foretold in Pſalm xxii. which I have before quoted. And they would have contrived the money they gave to Judas to have been one piece more or leſs than juſt thirty: they

they would not have come ſo punctually in the way of that Prophecy, Zech. xi. 12, 13.— "They weighed for my price thirty pieces of ſilver." And they would have bought any other field with it, but eſpecially not that of the Potter, which Zechariah there likewiſe mentions.

And as the enemies of Chriſt did not know they were fulfilling theſe Prophecies of him, ſo neither did his diſciples at the time when they were ſo doing. And it is ſaid, John xii. 16. "Theſe "things underſtood not his diſciples at the firſt; "but when Jeſus was glorified, then remem- "bered they that theſe things were written of "him, and that they had done theſe things unto "him." This makes the fulfilling theſe Prophecies yet more remarkable.

Where Providence ſees that Prophecies will not be minded, they are more expreſs and plain: as likewiſe where the paſſions and intereſts of men will hurry them on towards fulfilling them. Thus Alexander the Great is deſcribed as plainly almoſt as if he had been named, Dan. viii. 20, 21, 22. And it is ſaid, that this Prophecy, which was ſhewed him by the High Prieſt at Jeruſalem, did encourage him in his expedition againſt the Perſians. But it is not ſo when a man is to do fooliſh and wicked things, and things hurtful to himſelf; for if theſe were told plainly and literally, it would be in his power to do

do otherwiſe; unleſs God ſhould force his will, and then he would not be a free agent.

(22.) De. I muſt have recourſe to the Jews in anſwer to theſe Prophecies of the Meſſiah which you have brought; for they owning theſe Scriptures as Revelations given them by God, muſt have ſome ſolution or other for them, or elſe give themſelves up as ſelf-condemned.

Chr. The anſwers the Jews give will convince you the more, and render them indeed ſelf-condemned.

Before the coming of Chriſt the Jews underſtood theſe texts as we do, to be certainly meant of the Meſſiah, and of none other.

But ſince that time they have forced themſelves to put the moſt ſtrained and contradictory meanings upon them; for they agree not in their expoſitions, and the one does manifeſtly deſtroy the other.

Thus that text I before quoted, Gen. xlix. 10. was underſtood by the Chaldee and ancient Jewiſh interpreters to be meant of the Meſſiah.

Yet of their modern Rabbies ſome ſay, that it was meant of Moſes; but others reject that, firſt, becauſe it is plain that the gathering of the nations or Gentiles was not to Moſes. Secondly, becauſe the ſcepter was not given to Judah

Judah till long after Moſes. The firſt of it that appears was Judg. xx. 18. when Judah was commanded by God to "go up firſt," and lead the reſt of the tribes; and David was the firſt king of the tribe of Judah. Thirdly, becauſe Moſes did propheſy of a greater than himſelf to come, to whom the people ſhould hearken. Deut. xviii. 15, 18, 19.

For theſe reaſons other Rabbies ſay it could not be meant of Moſes, but they apply it to the tabernacle of Shiloh. This was only for the ſake of the word Shiloh, for otherwiſe it bears no reſemblance either to the gathering of the Gentiles, or the ſceptre of Judah: and though the houſe of God was firſt ſet up at Shiloh, yet it was removed from thence, and eſtabliſhed at Jeruſalem; which was the place of which Moſes ſpoke that God would place his name there, as I ſhall ſhew you preſently.

This interpretation therefore being rejected, other Rabbies ſay, that this Prophecy muſt be meant of the Meſſiah, but that by the word ſceptre is not to be underſtood a ſceptre of rule or government, but of correction and puniſhment, and that this ſhould not depart from Judah till Shiloh came. But the text explaining ſceptre by the word law-giver, that the ſceptre ſhould not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet until Shiloh came, over-

throws this interpretation, and ſhews the ſceptre here mentioned to be meant of a ſceptre of rule and government. Again, Joſhua gave them reſt from their enemies round about; and the land had reſt many years under their judges; and David delivered them out of the hands of their enemies; and under Solomon they were the richeſt and happieſt people upon earth; and frequently after they were in good condition and at eaſe: ſo that the ſceptre of correction did often depart from them before Shiloh came.

This is ſo evident, that others of them allow this ſceptre to be a ſceptre of government; but they ſay the meaning is, that the ſceptre ſhall not finally or for ever depart from Judah, becauſe the Meſſiah will come and reſtore it to Judah again. But this is adding to the text, and making a new text of it, and quite different from the former, nay directly oppoſite to it; for the text ſpeaks only of the departing of the ſceptre, but nothing of the reſtoring it; and it cannot be reſtored till once it is departed: therefore this expoſition ſaying it "ſhall depart," and the text ſaying "ſhall not depart," are directly contrary.

Laſtly, there are others who throw aſide all theſe excuſes, and ſay, that the ſceptre or dominion is not yet departed from Judah, for that ſome Jew or other may have ſome ſort of rule

or

or government, in ſome part or other of the world, though we know it not.

De. As if the Jews (who hold the beſt correſpondence with one another of any people) could not tell this place, if there were any ſuch where they were governed by their own laws, and by governments of their own nation, though in ſubjection to the government of the country where they lived.

Theſe ſalvos of the Jews are contradictory to each other, they are poor excuſes, and ſhew their cauſe to be perfectly deſtitute.

But I have an objection againſt this Prophecy, which affects both Jews and Chriſtians: that the regal ſceptre did depart from the tribe of Judah long before your Shiloh came.

Chr. Firſt, this Prophecy does not call the ſceptre a regal ſceptre, and therefore denotes only government in the general.

Secondly, The whole land and the nation took their name from Judah. It was called the land of Judah, and the nation took the name of Jews from Judah, as before that of Hebrews from Heber their progenitor, Gen. x. 25. And this Prophecy ſpoke of thoſe times when Judah ſhould be the father of his country, and the whole nation ſhould be comprehended under the name of Judah: and therefore Judah holds the ſceptre wherever a Jew governs.—

Beſides the words ſceptre and throne are uſed in relation to inferior governors, to tributary kings, and kings in captivity; thus it is ſaid, that thirty-ſeven years after the captivity of Judah, the king of Babylon ſet the throne of Jehoiachin, king of Judah, above the thrones of kings that were with him in Babylon. 2 Kings xxv. 27, 28. This was more than half the time of the captivity; and this was continued to Jehoiachin all the "days of his life," (ver. 29, 30.) which might laſt till the end, or near the end, of the captivity. But beſides the king, the Jews had governors of their own nation allowed them, who were their archonites or rulers; and they enjoyed their own laws, though in ſubjection to the King of Babylon. The elders of Judah (which was a name of government) are mentioned in the captivity. Ezek. viii. 1. And the chief of the Fathers of Judah, and the Prieſts and the Levites. Ezra i. 5. And after the captivity, they had a triſhahta or governor of their own nation. Ezra ii. 63. Neh. viii. 9.—And the throne or the governor is named. Neh. iii. 7. So that here was ſtill the throne or ſceptre of Judah.

And from the time of the Maccabees to their conqueſt by the Romans, the ſupreme authority was in their High Prieſts: as it was afterwards, but in ſubjection to the Romans; and they enjoyed

joyed their own laws.—"Pilate ſaid unto them, "take ye him, and judge him according to your "law." John xviii. 31. And though they anſwered, "It is not lawful for us to put any man "to death; the reaſon is given in the next verſe, "That the ſaying of Jeſus might be ful-"filled which he ſpake, ſignifying what death "he ſhould die." For crucifixion was a Roman death;" but ſtoning, by the law of Moſes, was the death for blaſphemy, of which they accuſed him. And they afterwards ſtoned St. Stephen for the ſame (alledged) crime, according to their own law. Their High Prieſts and Council had full liberty to meet when they pleaſed, and to act according to their law. And Chriſt himſelf owns they "ſat in Moſes's ſeat." Matth. xxiii. 2. The High Prieſt ſat to judge St. Paul, who applied to him that text, Exod. xxii. 28. "Thou ſhalt not revile the gods, nor "curſe the ruler of thy people, or ſpeak evil "of him," as the Apoſtle renders it, Acts. xxiii. 5. So that here the government was ſtill in the Jews, though in ſubjection to the Romans; and thus it continued till the deſtruction of Jeruſalem and the temple by the Romans. But ſince that time they are diſperſed in all countries, and have no governor or ruler of their own in any. The ſceptre is entirely departed from them.

De. It is impoſſible but the Jews muſt ſee the difference of their ſtate before the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, and ſince, and of their condition, as to government in their ſeveral captivities, and now in their diſperſion. In the former, they had ſtill a face of government left among themſelves: but now, none at all. And their excuſes which you have mentioned, render them indeed ſelf-condemned.

What do they ſay to that text you have quoted, Jer. xxiii. 17, &c. that David ſhould never want a ſon to ſit upon his throne, &c. You Chriſtians apply it to Chriſt, who was called the Son of David; but to whom do the Jews apply it?

Chr. Some of them ſay, that David will be raiſed from the dead, and made immortal, to fulfil this prophecy. Others ſay, that after the Meſſiah, who is to be of the ſeed of David, he ſhall thenceforward no more want a ſon, &c.

De. Both theſe interpretations are in flat contradiction to the text. The text ſays, ſhall never want; theſe ſay, ſhall want for a long time; they muſt confeſs now for near ſeventeen hundred years together, and how much longer they cannot tell. They have had none to ſit in Moſes's ſeat, or on the throne of David, though in ſubjection to their enemies, as they had in the worſt of their captivities; but have not now in their diſperſion.

But

But is there any difference betwixt what you call the cathedra, or ſeat of Moſes, and the throne of David?

CHR. None as to government; for Moſes was king in Jeſhurun, Deut. xxiii. 5. but David was the firſt king of the tribe of Judah, which was to be the name of the whole nation; and Chriſt was called the King of the Jews. It was the title ſet upon his croſs. But after him none ever had that title to this day.

DE. This is not to be anſwered by the Jews. But pray what perſon is it do they ſay was meant in the liiid. of Iſaiah, which you have quoted?

CHR. They will not have it to be any perſon at all; for they can find none, except our Chriſt, to whom theſe prophecies can any way be applied. Therefore they ſay it muſt be meant of the nation of the Jews, whoſe ſufferings, &c. are there deſcribed in the name of a perſon, by which the people are to be underſtood.

DE. But the people and the perſon there deſcribed as ſuffering, &c. are plainly contradiſtinguiſhed. It is ſaid, ver. 8. "For the tranſ-"greſſion of my people was he ſtricken."—And ver. 3, 4, &c. "We," (the people) "like "ſheep have gone aſtray——And the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all," that is, of

the people: who are here called wicked. But he is called "My righteous ſervant, who did "no violence, neither was any deceit in his "mouth." Therefore this people and the perſon here ſpoke of could not be the ſame. They are oppoſed to each other. The one called righteous, the other wicked. The one to die for the other, and to juſtify the other. "By "his knowledge ſhall my righteous ſervant juſ-"tify many," &c.

CHR. The Jews before Chriſt came underſtood this prophecy of the Meſſiah, as indeed it can be applied to none other: but the Jews ſince Chriſt, to avoid the force of this and other prophecies which ſpeak of the ſufferings and death of the Meſſiah, have invented two Meſſiahs, one Ben Joſeph, of the tribe of Ephraim, who is to be the ſuffering Meſſiah, the other Ben-David, of the tribe of Judah, who is to triumph glorioufly, and ſhall raiſe from the dead all the Iſraelites, and among them the firſt Meſſiah, Ben-Joſeph.

DE. Does the Scripture ſpeak of two Meſſiahs, and the one raiſing the other?

CHR. No; not a word: but only of the Meſſiah, which ſhews it ſpoke only of one.—It mentions the twofold ſtate of this Meſſiah, the firſt ſuffering, the ſecond triumphing. Whence the modern Jews have framed to themſelves theſe two Meſſiahs.

DE.

DE. This is ſhameful! And plainly to avoid the prophecies againſt them.

CHR. This of Iſaiah is fully explained, Dan. ix. 24, &c. where it is ſaid, that the Meſſiah the Prince ſhould be cut off, but not for himſelf, but for the tranſgreſſions of the people, "To "make an end of ſins, and to make reconci- "liation for iniquity." And that this was to be within four hundred and ninety years after the building of the ſecond temple, which I have mentioned before.

DE. I cannot imagine how the Jews get clear of this.

CHR. They cannot. But in ſpite to it, they ſeek now to undervalue the whole book of Daniel, though they dare not totally reject it, becauſe it was received by their forefathers, who preceded Chriſt. But about a hundred years after Chriſt they made a new diſtribution of the books of the Old Teſtament, different from their fathers, and took the book of Daniel out of the middle of the Prophets, where it was placed before, and put it laſt of all. But more than this, to leſſen the credit of this book, they adventured to ſhake the authority of their whole Scriptures; for they took upon them to make a diſtinction of the books of the Scripture, and made them not all inſpired or canonical, but ſome of them they called Ἁγιόγραφα, that is, holy

or pious books, though in a lower claſs than thoſe called inſpired or canonical Scriptures.—And they put the book of Daniel into the inferior claſs; but in that book Daniel ſpeaks of himſelf as having received theſe prophecies immediately from an angel of God. Wherein if he told us the truth, it muſt be put in the higheſt claſs of canonical Scripture; but if he told us falſe, then this book is quite through all a lie, and blaſphemous too, in fathering it all upon God! So that the diſtinction of our modern Jews confounds themſelves. And ſince they allow this book of Daniel a place among the Ἁγιόγραφα, or holy writings, they cannot deny it to be truly canonical, as all their fathers owned it before the coming of Chriſt. And if they throw off Daniel, they muſt diſcard Ezekiel too: for he gives the higheſt atteſtation to Daniel that can be given to mortal man; he makes him one of the three moſt righteous men to be found in all ages, and the very ſtandard of wiſdom to the world. Ezek. xiv. 14, 20. xxviii. 3.

De. What do they ſay to Hag. ii. 7, 9. where it is ſaid, that Chriſt was to come into the ſecond Temple?

Chr. Some of them ſay, that this muſt be meant of a temple yet to be built.

De. This is denying the prophecy; for it is ſaid, ver. 7. "I will fill this houſe with glory, "&c."

" &c." And ver. 9. " The glory of this lat-
" ter houſe—And in this place will I give
" peace, &c." but I am not to defend the cauſe of the Jews. It ſeems to me very deſperate. I own you Chriſtians have the advantage of them in this.

CHR. And I hope it will have ſo much effect with you, as to make you conſider ſeriouſly of the weight of this argument of prophecy we have diſcourſed.

DE. Let us at preſent leave this head of prophecy. Have you any further evidence to produce for your Chriſt?

(VII.) CHR. I have one more, which is yet more peculiar to him than even that of prophecy. For whatever weak pretence may be made of ſome prophecies among the Heathen, as to ſome particular events, of little conſequence to the world, yet they never offered at that ſort of evidence I am next to produce; which is not only prophecies of the fact, and that from the beginning of the world, but alſo types, reſemblances, and exhibitions of the fact, in outward ſenſible inſtitutions, ordained as law from the beginning, and to continue till the fact they prefigured ſhould come to paſs.

(1.) Such were the ſacrifices inſtituted by God immediately upon the fall, (and upon his

promiſe of the life-giving ſeed, (Gen. iii. 15.) as types of that great and only propitiatory ſacrifice for ſin which was to come. Whoſe blood they ſaw continually ſhed (in type) in their daily ſacrifices.

Theſe were continued in the Heathen poſterities of Adam by immemorial tradition from the beginning, though they had forgot the beginning of them, as they had of the world, or of mankind; yet they retained ſo much of the reaſon of them, as that they had univerſally the notion of a vicarious atonement, and that our ſins were to be purged by the blood of others ſuffering in our ſtead. As likewiſe, that the blood of bulls and goats could not take away ſin, but that a more noble blood was neceſſary. Hence they came to human ſacrifices, and at laſt to ſacrifice the greateſt, moſt noble, and moſt virtuous; and ſuch offered themſelves to be ſacrificed for the ſafety of the people. As Codrus, King of the Athenians, who ſacrificed himſelf on this account. The like did Curtius for the Romans, as ſuppoſing himſelf the braveſt and moſt valuable of them all. So the Decii, the Fabii, &c. Agamemnon ſacrificed his daughter Iphigenia for the Greek army; and the King of Moab ſacrificed his eldeſt ſon that ſhould have reigned in his ſtead, 2 Kings iii. 27. Thus the ſacrificing (not their ſervants or ſlaves, but)

their children to Moloch, is frequently mentioned of the Jews, which they did in imitation of the Heathen, as it is ſaid, Pſal. cvi. 35, 36, 37, 38. "They were mingled among the Heathen, and "learned their works; and they ſerved their "idols—Yea they ſacrificed their ſons and their "daughters unto the idols of Canaan, &c."— Purſuant to which notion, the prophet introduceth them arguing thus: "Wherewith ſhall "I come before the Lord, and bow myſelf be- "fore the high God; Shall I come before him "with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year "old? Will the Lord be pleaſed with thouſands "of rams, or with ten thouſands of rivers of "oil? Shall I give my firſt-born for my tranſ- "greſſion, the fruit of my body for the ſin of "my ſoul?" Micah vi. 6, 7. They were plainly ſearching after a complete and adequate ſatisfaction for ſin; and they thought it neceſſary.

De. No doubt they thought ſo; but that did not make it neceſſary.

Chr. The doctrine of ſatisfaction is a ſubject by itſelf; which I have treated elſewhere, in my anſwer to the examination of my laſt dialogue againſt the Socinians. But I am not come ſo far with you yet; I am now only ſpeaking of ſacrifices as types of the ſacrifice of Chriſt.

(2.) And

(2.) And beſides ſacrifice in general, there were afterwards ſome particular ſacrifices appointed more nearly expreſſive of our redemption by Chriſt. As the paſſover, which was inſtituted in memory of the redemption of the children of Iſrael (that is, the church) out of Egypt, (the houſe of bondage of this world, where we are in ſervitude to ſin and miſery) in the night when God ſlew all the firſt born of the Egyptians: but the deſtroyer was to paſs over thoſe houſes where he ſaw the blood of the Paſchal Lamb upon the door-poſts. And it was to be eaten with unleavened bread, expreſſing a ſincerity of the heart, without any mixture or taint of wickedneſs. And thus it is applied, 1 Cor. v. 7, 8. "Purge out therefore "the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, "as ye are unleavened. For even Chriſt our "paſſover is ſacrificed for us. Therefore let us "keep the feaſt, not with old leaven, neither "with the leaven of malice and wickedneſs, "but with the unleavened bread of ſincerity and "truth."

(3.) There was a double exhibition of Chriſt on the great day of expiation, which was but once a year; on which day only the High Prieſt entered into the holy of holies (which repreſented heaven, Exod. xxv. 40. Wiſd. ix. 8. Heb.

Heb. ix. 24.) with the blood of the ſacrifice, whoſe body was burnt without the camp; to ſhew God's deteſtation of ſin: and that it was to be removed far from us: and that we muſt go out of the camp, that is, out of this world, bearing our reproach for ſin, before we can be quite freed from it. See how exactly this was fulfilled in Chriſt, Heb. xiii. 11, 12, 13, 14.— "For the bodies of thoſe beaſts whoſe blood is "brought into the ſanctuary by the High Prieſt "for ſin, are burnt without the camp. Where- "fore Jeſus alſo, that he might ſanctify the "people with his own blood, ſuffered with- "out the gate. Let us forth therefore unto "him without the camp, bearing his reproach; "for here we have no continuing city, but we "ſeek one to come."

The other lively repreſentation of Chriſt's bearing our ſins, and taking them away from us, which was made on the ſame day of expiation, was the ſcape goat, Lev. xvi. 21, 22. "And "Aaron ſhall lay both his hands upon the head "of the live goat, and confeſs over him all the "iniquities of the children of Iſrael, and all "their tranſgreſſions in all their ſins, putting "them upon the head of the goat, and ſhall "ſend them away by the hand of a fit man into "the wilderneſs. And the goat ſhall bear upon "him all their iniquities, into a land not inha- "bited:

" bited: and he ſhall let go the goat in the " wilderneſs." This is ſo plain, that it needs no application.

(4.) Another expreſs repreſentation of Chriſt was the brazen ſerpent in the wilderneſs, by looking upon which the people were cured of the ſtings of the fiery ſerpents. So in looking upon Chriſt by faith, the ſting of the old ſerpent, the devil, is taken away. And the lifting up the ſerpent did repreſent Chriſt being lifted up upon the croſs. Chriſt himſelf makes the alluſion, John iii. 14. " As Moſes lifted up the " ſerpent in the wilderneſs, even ſo muſt the " ſon of man be lifted up; that whoſoever be- " lieveth in him ſhould not periſh, but have " eternal life."

(5.) He was likewiſe repreſented by the manna; for he was the true bread that came down from heaven to nouriſh us unto eternal life. John 31 to 36.

(6.) As alſo by the rock whence the waters flowed out to give them drink in the wilderneſs. " And that rock was Chriſt." 1 Cor. x. 4.

(7.) And he was not only their meat and drink, but he was alſo their conſtant guide, and led

led them in a pillar of fire by night, and of a cloud by day. And the cloud of glory in the temple, in which God appeared, was by the Jews underſtood as a type of the Meſſiah, who is the true Shechina, or habitation of God.

(8.) The ſabbath is called a ſhadow of Chriſt, Col. ii. 17. It is a figure of that eternal reſt procured to us by Chriſt; therefore it is called a ſign of the perpetual covenant, Exod. xxxi. 16, 17. Eezk. xx. 12.

(9.) And ſuch a ſign was the Temple at Jeruſalem, at which place, and none other, the ſacrifices of the Jews were to be offered, Deut. xii. 11, 13, 14. Becauſe Chriſt was to be ſacrificed there, and as a token of it, thoſe ſacrifices which were types of him were to be offered only there.

And ſo great ſtreſs was laid upon this, that no ſin of the Jews is oftener remembered than their breach of this command. It was a blot ſet upon their ſeveral reformations, otherwiſe good and commendable in the ſight of God, that the high places (where they uſed to ſacrifice) were not taken away. This is marked as the great defect in the reformation of Aſa, 1 Kings xv. 14. of Jehoſhaphat, 1 King xxii. 43. of Jehoaſh, 2 Kings xii. 3. of Amaziah, 2 Kings

xv. 4. of Jotham, ver. 35. But they were taken away by Hezekiah, 2 Kings xviii. 4. and the people inſtructed to ſacrifice and burn incenſe at Jeruſalem only. 2 Chron. xxxii. 12. Iſai. xxxvi. 7.

There was likewiſe a further deſign of Providence in limiting their ſacrifices to Jeruſalem, which was, that after the great propitiatory ſacrifices of Chriſt had been once offered there, God was to remove the Jews from Jeruſalem, that they might have no ſacrifice at all (as, for that reaſon, they have not had any part of the world near theſe ſeventeen hundred years paſt) to inſtruct them. That (as the Apoſtle ſpeaks to them, Heb. x. 26.) "there remaineth no "more" (or other) "ſacrifice for ſins." And ſince by the law their ſins were to be purged by ſacrifice, they have now no way to purge their ſins; to force them (as it were) to look back upon that only ſacrifice which can purge their ſins. And till they return to that, they muſt have no ſacrifice at all, but die in their ſins. As Jeſus ſaid unto them, "I go my way, and ye "ſhall die in your ſins.—For if ye believe not "that I am he, ye ſhall die in your ſins," John viii. 21. 24.

And Daniel propheſied expreſsly, that ſoon after the death of the Meſſiah, the city of Jeruſalem and the ſanctuary ſhould be deſtroyed, and

and that the ſacrifice ſhould ceaſe, "Even until "the conſummation, and that determined, ſhall "be poured upon the deſolate." Dan. ix. 26, 27.

And this deſolation of theirs, and what was determined upon them, was told them likewiſe by Hoſea, chap. iii. 4. "For the children of "Iſrael ſhall abide many days without a ſacri "fice." But he ſays in the next verſe, that "in the latter days they ſhall return, and ſeek "the Lord their God, and David their king;" that is, the Son of David, their Prince and Meſſiah. As he is called Meſſiah the Prince, Dan. ix. 25.

Thus as ſalvation was of the Jews, becauſe Chriſt was to come of them, ſo this ſalvation was only to be had at Jeruſalem, where he was to ſuffer, and by which only ſalvation was to be had.

(10.) De. This argument is to the Jews; and if I were a Jew it would move me, becauſe they never were ſo long before without king, temple, or ſacrifice.

Chr. But the prophecies of it, and theſe fulfilled as you have ſeen; and Chriſt being ſo plainly pointed at, and the place of his paſſion, by limiting the ſacrifices to Jeruſalem only; and by cauſing the legal ſacrifices to ceaſe through-

out

out the world, to ſhew that they were fulfilled: all this is a ſtrong evidence to you of the truth of theſe things, and of our Jeſus being the Meſſiah, or Chriſt, who was propheſied of.

De. I cannot deny but there is ſomething remarkable in this, which I will take time to conſider; but I do not ſee how the Jews can ſtand out againſt this, becauſe this mark given by Daniel of the Meſſiah, that ſoon after his death the ſacrifice ſhould ceaſe, cannot agree to any after-Meſſiah who ſhould now come ſo many ages after the ſacrifice has ceaſed.

Chr. Since we have fallen into the ſubject of the Jews, I will give you another prophecy which cannot be fulfilled in any after-Meſſiah whom the Jews expect. And it will be alſo a confirmation to you to the truth of the prophecies of the Holy Scriptures.

Thus God ſpeaks, Jer. xxiii. 20, 21, 22.— "thus ſaith the Lord, if you can break my "covenant of the day, and my covenant of "the night, and that there ſhould not be day "and night in their ſeaſon: then may alſo my "covenant be broken with David my ſer- "vant, that he ſhould not have a ſon to reign "upon his throne; and with the Levites, the "Prieſts, my miniſters. As the hoſt of heaven "cannot be numbered, neither the ſand of the

"ſea

" ſea meaſured: ſo will I multiply the ſeed of " David my ſervant, and the Levites that miniſ- " ter unto me."

Now let the Jews tell in which Son of David this is fulfilled, except only in our Chriſt.

And how this is made good to the Prieſts and Levites, otherwiſe than as Iſaiah propheſied, chap. lxvi. 21. " And I will alſo take of them" (the Gentiles) " for Prieſts and for Levites, " ſaith the Lord." And as it is thus applied, 1 Pet. ii. 5, 9, and Rev. i. 6. And this evangelical prieſthood is multiplied as the ſtars of heaven, (which they were frequently called) not like the tribe of Levi, which could not afford Prieſts to all the earth.

And as I ſaid before of Jeruſalem and the ſacrifices there, that they are ceaſed, to ſhew they are fulfilled, ſo here, after the Son of David was come, all his other ſons ceaſed, and the very genealogy of their tribes, and ſo of Judah, is loſt, as alſo of the tribe of Levi, ſo that the Jews can never tell, if any after-Meſſiah ſhould appear, whether he were of the tribe of Judah, far leſs whether he were of the lineage of David; nor can they ſhew the genealogy of any they call Levites now among them.

This is occaſioned by their being diſperſed among all nations, and yet preſerved a diſtinct people from all the earth, though without any country

country of their own, or King, or Prieſt, or temple, or ſacrifice. And they are thus preſerved by the providence of God, (ſo as never any nation was ſince the foundation of the world) to ſhew the fulfilling of the prophecies concerning them, and the judgments pronounced againſt them for their crucifying their Meſſiah; and that their converſion may be more apparent to the world, and their being gathered out of all nations, and reſtored to Jeruſalem (as is promiſed them) when they ſhall come to acknowledge their Meſſiah.

And God not permitting them to have any king or governor upon earth, ever ſince their laſt diſperſion by the Romans, (leſt they might ſay, that the ſceptre was not departed from Judah) is to convince them (when God ſhall take the veil of their heart) that no other Meſſiah who can come hereafter can anſwer this prophecy of Jeremiah, or that of Jacob, that the ſceptre ſhould not depart from Judah till Shiloh came.

(11.) And it is wonderful to conſider, how expreſsly their preſent ſtate is propheſied of, that it could not be more literal, if it were to be worded now by us who ſee it. As that they ſhould be ſcattered into all countries, ſifted as with a ſieve among all nations, yet preſerved a people;

people; and that God would make an utter end of thoſe nations who had oppreſſed them, and blot out their names from under heaven. (As we have ſeen it fulfilled upon the great empires of the Aſſyrians, Chaldeans, and Romans, who one after the other had miſerably waſted the Jews) but that the name of the Jews (the feweſt and pooreſt of all nations) ſhould remain for ever, and they a people diſtinct from all the nations in the world, though ſcattered among them all. Read the prophecies expreſs upon this point. Jer. xxx. 11. xxxi. 36, 37. xxxiii. 24, 25, 26. xlvi. 28. Iſai. xxvii. 7. xxix. 7, 8. liv. 9, 10. lxv. 8. Ezek. vi. 8. xi. 16, 17. xii. 15, 16. Amos ix. 8, 9. Zech. x. 9. And it was foretold them long before, that thus it would be, Lev. xxvi. 44, and this "in the latter days." Deut. iv. 27, 30, 31. Thus Moſes told them of it ſo long before, as the after-prophets frequently; and you ſee all theſe prophecies literally fulfilled and fulfilling. The like cannot be ſaid of any other nation that ever was upon the earth! So deſtroyed, and ſo preſerved! And for ſo long a time! Having worn out all the great empires of the world, and ſtill ſurviving them! To fulfil what was further propheſied of them to the end of the world.

Dr. I cannot ſay but there is ſomething very ſurpriſing in this: I never thought of it before.

It

It is a living prophecy, which we ſee fulfilled and ſtill fulfilling at this day before our eyes. For we are ſure theſe prophecies were not coined yeſterday; and they are as expreſs and particular as if they were to be wrote now, after the events are ſo far come to paſs.

(12.) Chr. As the door was kept open to Chriſt before he came, by the many and flagrant prophecies of him, and by the types repreſenting him, ſo was the door for ever ſhut after him, by thoſe prophecies being all fulfilled and completed in him, and applicable to none who ſhould come after him; and by all the types ceaſing, the ſhadows vaniſhing when the ſubſtance was come. No Meſſiah can come now, before the ſceptre depart from Judah, and the ſacrifice from Jeruſalem. Before the ſons of David (all except Chriſt) ſhall ceaſe to ſit upon his throne, none can come now, within four hundred and ninety years of the building of the ſecond Temple; nor come into that very Temple, as I have before ſhewed was expreſsly propheſied by Daniel and Haggai.

De. I know not what the Jews can ſay, who own theſe prophecies.

Chr. They ſay, that the coming of the Meſſiah at the time ſpoke of in the Prophets, has been delayed becauſe of their ſins.

De.

De. Then it may be delayed for ever, unleſs they can tell us when they will grow better. But, however, theſe prophecies have failed which ſpoke of the time of the Meſſiah's coming; and they can never be a proof hereafter, becauſe the time is paſt. So that, according to this, they were made for no purpoſe, unleſs to ſhew that they were falſe; that is, no prophecies at all!

But were theſe prophecies upon condition? Or was it ſaid that the coming of the Meſſiah ſhould be delayed if the Jews were ſinful?

Chr. No: ſo far from it, that it was expreſsly propheſied that the coming of the Meſſiah ſhould be in the moſt ſinful ſtate of the Jews, and to purge their ſins. Dan. ix. 24. Zech. xiii. 1. And the ancient tradition of the Jews was purſuant to this, that at the coming of the Meſſiah the temple ſhould be a den of thieves. Rabbi Juda in Maſoreta. And a time of great corruption. Talmud. tit. de Synedrio, and de Ponderibus, &c.

But more than this, the very caſe is put of their being moſt ſinful, and it is expreſsly ſaid, that this ſhould not hinder the fulfilling of the prophecies concerning the coming of the Meſſiah, ſpoke of as the ſon of David, 2 Sam. vii. 14, 15, 16. Pſal. lxxxix. 30, 33—37.

But it was propheſied that they ſhould not

know their Meſſiah, and ſhould reject him when he came; that he ſhould be a "ſtone of ſtum-"bling," and a "rock of offence" to them. Iſai. viii. 14, 15. And that "their eyes ſhould "be cloſed," that they ſhould not underſtand their own Prophets, chap. xxix. 9, 10, 11.— That their builders ſhould reject the head-ſtone of their corner, Pſal. cxviii. 22. And the like in ſeveral other places of their own prophets. And thus they miſtook the prophecy concerning the coming of Elias, whom it is ſaid they knew not, "but did to him what they liſted," and ſo the ſame of Chriſt, Matt. xvii. 12. And it is ſaid, 1 Cor. ii. 8, that "had they known "it, they would not have crucified the Lord of "glory."

De. This indeed ſolves the prophecies, both thoſe of the coming of the Meſſiah, and of the Jews not knowing him, and therefore rejecting him; and likewiſe obviates this excuſe of theirs; for if they were very ſinful at that time, it was a greater puniſhment of their ſin not to know, and to reject their Meſſiah, than his not coming at that time would have been.

Chr. The great ſin mentioned for which they were puniſhed by ſeveral captivities, was their idolatry, the laſt and longeſt of which captivities was that of ſeventy years in Babylon; ſince which time they have forſaken their idolatry,

latry, and have never been nationally guilty of it ſince, but always had it in the utmoſt abhorrence. But ſince their rejecting their Meſſiah, they have now been near ſeventeen hundred years not in a captivity, where they might be all together, and enjoying their own law, government, and worſhip, in ſome manner, but diſperſed over all the world, without country of their own, or King, or Prieſt, or Temple, or Sacrifice, or any Prophet to comfort them, or give them hopes of a reſtoration: and all this come upon them, not for their old ſin of idolatry, but from that curſe they imprecated upon themſelves, when they crucified their Meſſiah, ſaying, 'His blood be on us, and on our children.' Which cleaves unto them from that day to this, and is viſible to all the world but to themſelves! And what other ſin can they think greater than idolatry, for which they have been puniſhed ſo much more terribly than for all their idolatries; what other ſin can this be, but their crucifying the Meſſiah! And here they may ſee their ſinful ſtate, which they allege as an excuſe for their Meſſiah's not coming at the time foretold by the Prophets, rendered ten-fold more ſinful, by their rejecting him when he came.

De. This is a full anſwer, and convincing as

to the Jews. But have you any more to ſay to me?

(13.) CHR. I have one thing more to offer, which may come under this head of types, and that is, perſons who repreſented Chriſt in ſeveral particulars, and ſo might be called perſonal types.

And I will not apply theſe out of my own head, but as they are applied in the New Teſtament, which having all the marks of the Old Teſtament, and ſtronger evidence than theſe, in thoſe marks we are now upon, their authority is indiſputable.

(1.) I begin with Adam, who gave us life and death too; and Chriſt came by his death to reſtore us to life again, even life eternal. Hence Chriſt is called the ſecond Adam, and Adam is called the figure of Chriſt. The parallel betwixt them is inſiſted on, Rom v. 12, to the end, and 1 Cor. xv. 45 to 50. Eve received her life from Adam, as the church from Chriſt. She was taken out of the ſide of Adam when he was in a dead ſleep; and after Chriſt was dead, the ſacraments of water and blood flowed out of his ſide, that is, baptiſm, whereby we are born into Chriſt, and the ſacrament of his blood, whereby we are nouriſhed into eternal life.

(2.) Enoch

(2.) Enoch was carried up bodily into heaven: as Elijah. One under the patriarchal, the other under the legal diſpenſation. In both, the aſcenſion of Chriſt was prefigured.

(3.) Noah, a preacher of righteouſneſs to the old world, and father of the new. Who ſaved the church by water, the like figure whereunto even baptiſm doth alſo now ſave us, 1 Pet. iii. 20, 21.

(4.) Melchiſedec, that is, King of Righteouſneſs, and King of Peace, and Prieſt of the moſt High God; who was made like unto the Son of God, a prieſt continually. Heb. vii. 1, 2, 3.

(5) Abraham, the friend of God, and Father of the faithful, the heir of the world, Rom. iv. 13. In whom all the nations of the earth are bleſſed, Gen. xviii. 18.

(6.) Iſaac, the heir of this promiſe, was born after his father and mother were both paſt the age of generation in the courſe of nature, Gen. xvii. 17. xviii. 11. Rom. iv. 19. Heb. xi. 11, 12. The neareſt type that could be to the generation of Chriſt wholly without a man.

And his ſacrifice had a very near reſemblance to the ſacrifice and death of Chriſt, who lay three days in the grave, and Iſaac was three days a dead man (as we ſay in the law) under the ſentence of death, Gen. xxii. 4, whence Abraham

received him in a figure, Heb. xi. 19, that is, of the reſurrection of Chriſt. And Abraham was commanded to go three days journey to ſacrifice Iſaac upon the ſame mountain, (according to the ancients) where Chriſt was crucified, and where Adam was buried. Again the common epithet of Chriſt, i. e. "the only-begotten of "the Father, and his beloved Son," were both given to Iſaac, Gen. xxii. 2. Heb. xi. 17. For he was the only ſon that was begotten in that miraculous manner, after both his parents were decayed by nature. And he was the only ſon of the promiſe, which was not made to the ſeed of Abraham in general, but "in Iſaac ſhall thy "ſeed be called," Gen. xxi. 12. "He ſaith not, "And to ſeeds, as of many, but as of one. And "to thy ſeed, which is Chriſt," Gal. iii. 16.

And as Iſaac, which ſignifies rejoicing, or laughing for joy, was thus the only begotten of his parents, ſo Abram ſignifies the glorious father, and Abraham (into which his name was changed on the promiſe of Iſaac, Gen. xvii. 5, 16.) ſignifies the father of a multitude, to expreſs the coming in of the Gentiles to Chriſt, and the increaſe of the Goſpel; whence it is there ſaid to Abraham, "A father of many na-"tions have I made thee, and in thy ſeed all the "nations of the earth ſhall be bleſſed."

Iſaac, who was born by promiſe of a free woman,

man, repreſented the Chriſtian church, in oppoſition to Iſhmael, who was born after the fleſh, of a bond-maid, and ſignified the Jewiſh church under the law. See this allegory carried on, Gal. iv. 21, to the end.

(7.) Jacob, in his Viſion of the Ladder, (Gen. xxviii. 12.) ſhews the intercourſe which was opened by Chriſt betwixt heaven and earth, by his making peace: and to this he alludes when he ſays, "Hereafter you ſhall ſee Heaven open, "and the angels of God aſcending and deſcend-"ing upon the Son of Man," John i. 15.

And Jacob's wreſtling with the angel, (Gen. xxxii. 24, &c. Hoſ. xii. 4.) and as it were prevailing over him by force to bleſs him, ſhews the ſtrong and powerful interceſſion of Chriſt; whereby (as he words it, Matt. xi. 12.) "heaven "ſuffereth violence, and the violent take it by "force." Whence the name of Jacob was then turned to Iſrael, that is, one who prevails upon God, or has power over him; God repreſenting himſelf here as overcome by us: and the name of Iſrael was ever after given to the church. But much more ſo when Chriſt came, as he ſaid, Matt. xi. 12. "From the "days of John the Baptiſt until now, the king-"dom of heaven ſuffereth violence," &c. that is, from the firſt promulgation of Chriſt being come. Thenceforward the Gentiles began to

preſs into the Goſpel, and as by force to take it from the Jews. This was ſignified in the name Jacob, that is, a ſupplanter, for the Gentiles here ſupplanted their elder brother the Jews, and ſtole the bleſſing and heirſhip from them.

(8.) Joſeph was ſold by his brethren out of envy; but it proved the preſervation of them and all their families: and Chriſt was ſold by his brethren out of envy, Mark xv. 10, which proved the means of their redemption: and Chriſt, as Joſeph, became Lord over his brethren.

(9.) Moſes calls Chriſt a Prophet like unto himſelf, Deut. xviii. 18. He repreſented Chriſt the great Lawgiver; and his delivering Iſrael out of Egypt, was a type of Chriſt's delivering his church from the bondage of ſin and hell.

(10.) Joſhua, called alſo Jeſus, Heb. iv. 8, overcame all the enemies of Iſrael, and gave them poſſeſſion of the Holy Land, which was a type of heaven: and Chriſt appeared to Joſhua, as Captain of the Hoſt of the Lord, Joſ. v. 14. So that Joſhua was his Lieutenant repreſenting him.

(11.) Sampſon, who by his ſingle valour and his own ſtrength overcame the Philiſtines, and ſlew more at his death than in all his life, was a repreſentation of Chriſt, who "trod the wine-preſs

" preſs alone, and of the people there was none " with him, but his own arm brought him ſal- " vation," Iſai. lxiii. 3, 5. But his death completed his victory, whereby he overcame all the power of the enemy, " and having ſpoiled " principalities and powers, he made a ſhew of " them openly, triumphing over them in his " croſs," Col. ii. 15.

(12.) David, whoſe Son Chriſt is called, ſpeaks frequently of him in his own perſon, and in events which cannot be applied to David, as Pſal. xvi. 10. " Thou wilt not leave my ſoul in " hell, nor ſuffer thine Holy One to ſee corrup- " tion;" for David has ſeen corruption. Chriſt is ſaid to ſit upon the throne of David, Iſai. ix. 7. And Chriſt is called by the name of David, Hoſ. iii. 5. and frequently in the Prophets.

David from a ſhepherd became a King and a Prophet, denoting the threefold office of Chriſt, paſtoral, regal, and prophetical.

(13.) Solomon, the wiſeſt of men, his peaceable and magnificent reign repreſented the triumphal ſtate of Chriſt's kingdom, which is deſcribed, Pſal. lxxii. inſcribed for Solomon, (there called the king's ſon) but far exceeding the glory of his reign, or what can poſſibly be applied to him, as ver. 5, 8, 11, 17. But his reign came the neareſt of any to that univerſal and glorious reign there deſcribed, particularly

in his being choſen to build the temple, becauſe he was a man of peace, and had ſhed no blood, like David his father, who conquered the enemies of Iſrael, but Solomon built the Church in full peace; and as it is particularly ſet down, 1 Kings vi. 7, and no doubt he was ordered by God ſo to do, "That the houſe when it was "building, was built of ſtone made ready before "it was brought thither; ſo that there was neither hammer nor ax, nor any tool of iron "heard in the houſe while it was building." Which did denote that the Church of Chriſt was to be built, not only in peace, but without noiſe or confuſion, as Iſaiah propheſied of him, chap. xlii. 2. "He ſhall not cry, nor lift up, nor "cauſe his voice to be heard in the ſtreet: a "bruiſed reed ſhall he not break," &c. He was not to conquer with the ſword, as the Iſraelites ſubdued Canaan, but to overcome by meekneſs, and doing good to his enemies, and patiently ſuffering all injuries from them. And ſo he taught his followers, as St. Paul ſays, 2 Tim. ii. 24. "The ſervant of the Lord must "not ſtrive, but be gentle unto all men.—In "meekneſs inſtructing thoſe that oppoſe themſelves," &c.

And I cannot think but there was ſome imitation of this peaceable temple of Solomon, in the temple of Janus among the Romans; for that

was

was never to be ſhut but in time of peace; which happened rarely among them, but three times in all their hiſtory. The laſt was in the reign of Auguſtus, in which time Chriſt came into the world, when there was a profound and univerſal peace: and ſo it became the Prince of Peace, whoſe birth was thus proclaimed by the Angels, Luke ii. 14. "Glory to God on high, "and on earth peace, good-will towards men." But to go on.

(14.) Jonah's being three days and nights in the belly of the whale, was a ſign of Chriſt's being ſo long in the heart of the earth. Chriſt himſelf makes the alluſion, Matt. xii. 40.

(15.) But as there were ſeveral perſons, at ſeveral times, repreſenting and prefiguring ſeveral particulars of the life and death of Chriſt; ſo there was one ſtanding and continual repreſentation of him appointed in the perſon of the High Prieſt under the law; who, entering into the holy of holies once a year, with the blood of the great expiatory ſacrifice, and he only, to make atonement for ſin, did lively repreſent our great High Prieſt entering into Heaven, once for all, with all his own blood, to expiate the ſins of the whole world. This is largely inſiſted upon in the Epiſtle to the Hebrews, chap. vii. viii. ix. x.

And our deliverance by the death of Chriſt is

repreſented, as in a picture, in that ordinance of the law, that the man-ſlayer, who fled to one of the cities of refuge, (which were all of the cities of the Levites) ſhould not come out thence till the death of the High Prieſt, and no ſatisfaction be taken till then, and then he ſhould be acquitted and "return into the land of his poſſeſ-"ſion," Num. xxxv. 6, 25, 26, 27, 28.

And I doubt not but the Gentiles had from hence their aſyla or temples of refuge for criminals.

(1.) Dr. There is a reſemblance in theſe things; but I would not have admitted them as a proof, if you had not ſupported them, at leaſt moſt of them, with the authority of the New Teſtament. And it was not neceſſary that every one ſhould be named in it; for thoſe that are named are only occaſionally; and I muſt take time to conſider of the evidences you have brought for the authority of the New Teſtament, which you have made full as great, if not greater, than the evidences for the Old Teſtament.

Chr. I may ſay greater upon this head of Prophecies and Types, becauſe theſe are no proofs till they are fulfilled; though then they prove the truth of theſe Prophecies and Types; and ſo the one confirms the other: but the whole evidence of the law is not made apparent

rent till we ſee it fulfilled in the Goſpel. For which reaſon I call the Goſpel the ſtrongeſt proof, not only as to itſelf, but likewiſe as to the law; and the Jews, as much as in them lies, have invalidated this ſtrongeſt proof for the Old Teſtament, which is the fulfilling of it in the New. Nay, they have rendered theſe Prophecies falſe, which, they ſay, were not fulfilled at the time they ſpake of, and never now can be fulfilled. And as no fact but that of our Chriſt alone ever had his evidence of Prophecies and Types from the beginning, ſo never can any other fact have it now while the world laſts.

(2.) De. Why do you ſay, never can have it? For may not God make what fact he pleaſes, and give it what evidence he pleaſes?

Chr. But it cannot have the evidence that the fact of Chriſt has, unleſs at that diſtance of time hereafter, as from the beginning of the world to this day. Becauſe God took care that the evidence of Chriſt ſhould commence from the very beginning, in the promiſe of him made to Adam, and to be renewed by the Prophets in all the after-ages till he ſhould come: and the evidence of him after his coming (in which I have inſtanced) and which continues to this day, before it can belong to any other, muſt have the ſame compaſs of time that has gone to confirm this

this evidence, elſe it has not the ſame evidence.

(3.) DE. By this argument the evidence grows ſtronger the longer it continues, ſince you ſay, that the prophecies of the Scriptures reach to the end of the world, and ſo will be further and further fulfilling every day.

This is contrary to what one of your doctors has lately advanced, who pretends to calculate the age of evidences*, that in ſuch a time they decay, and in ſuch a time muſt die. And that the evidence of Chriſtianity having laſted ſo long, is upon the decay, and muſt wear out ſoon, if not ſupplied by ſome freſh and new evidence.

CHR. This may be true as to fables, which have no foundation: but is that Prophecy I mentioned to you of the diſperſion and yet wonderful preſervation of the Jews, leſs evident to you, becauſe it was made ſo long ago?

DE. No. It is much more evident for that. If I had lived at the time when thoſe Prophecies were made, I fancy I ſhould not have believed one word of them; but wondered at the aſſurance of thoſe who ventured to foretel ſuch improbable and almoſt impoſſible things.

* Craig, Theologiæ Chriſtianæ Principia Mathematica 1699.

And

And I ſhould have thought the ſame of what you have told me of your Chriſt, foretelling the progreſs of his Goſpel, at the firſt ſo very ſlender appearance of it, and by ſuch weak and improbable means, as only ſuffering and dying for it, which to me would have ſeemed perfect deſpair, and a giving up the cauſe.

I ſhould have thought of them (as of others) who propheſy of things after their time, that they might not be contradicted while they lived.

But my ſeeing ſo much of theſe Prophecies concerning the Jews, and the progreſs of the Goſpel, come to paſs ſo long time after, is the only thing that makes me lay ſtreſs upon them, and which makes them ſeem wonderful to me.

CHR. When the prophecies ſhall all be fully completed at the end of the world, they will then ſeem ſtrongeſt of all; they will then be undeniable; when Chriſt ſhall viſibly deſcend from heaven (in the ſame manner as he aſcended) to execute both what he has promiſed and threatened. And in the mean time, the Prophecies loſe none of their force, but their evidence encreaſes, as "the light ſhineth more and more "unto the perfect day."

(VIII.) DE. I obſerve you have made no uſe of that common topic of the truth and ſincerity

of

of thoſe penmen of the Scriptures, and what intereſt they could have in ſetting up theſe things if they had been falſe; for this can amount, at moſt, but to a probability: and you having produced thoſe evidences which you think infallible, it might ſeem a leſſening of your proof to inſiſt upon bare probabilities; ſo that I ſuppoſe you give that up.

(1.) CHR. No, Sir, I give it not up, though I have not made it the chief foundation of my argument; and if it were but a probability, it wants not its force; for it is thought unreaſonable to deny a flagrant probability, where there is not as ſtrong a probability on the other ſide, for then that makes a doubt: but otherwiſe, men generally are ſatisfied with probabilities, for that is the greateſt part of our knowledge. If we will believe nothing but what carries an infallible demonſtration along with it, we muſt be ſceptics in moſt things of the world; and ſuch were never thought the wiſeſt men.

But beſides, a probability may be ſooner diſcerned by ſome than the infallibility of a demonſtration; therefore we muſt not lay aſide probabilities.

But in this caſe, I think there is an infallible aſſurance, as infallible as the ſenſes of all mankind; and I ſuppoſe you will not aſk a greater.

(2.) DE.

(2.) De. How can you ſay that? When the ſuffering of afflictions, and death itſelf, is but a probability of the truth of what is told us: becauſe ſome have ſuffered death for errors.

Chr. But then they thought them true; and men may be deceived in their judgments: we ſee many examples of it. But if the facts related be ſuch, as that it is impoſſible for thoſe who tell them to be impoſed upon themſelves, or for thoſe to whom they are told to believe them, if not true, without ſuppoſing an univerſal deception of the ſenſes of mankind, then I hope I have brought the caſe up to that infallible demonſtration I promiſed: and this is the caſe of the facts related in Holy Scripture. They were told by thoſe who ſaw them, and did them, and they were told to thoſe who ſaw them likewiſe themſelves: and the relators appealed to this: ſo that here could be no deceit.

De. I grant there is a great difference between errors in opinion, and in fact; and that ſuch facts as are told of Moſes and of Chriſt, could not have paſſed upon the people then alive, and who were ſaid to have ſeen them. And I find that both Moſes, Chriſt, and the Apoſtles, did appeal to what the people they ſpoke to had ſeen themſelves.

Chr. With this conſideration, their patient ſuffering, even unto death, for the truth of what they

they taught, will be a full demonſtration of the truth of it.

(3.) Add to this, that their enemies who perſecuted them, the Romans, as well as Jews, to whom they appealed as witneſſes of the facts, did not offer to deny them.

That none of the apoſtates from Chriſtianity did attempt to detect any falſhood in the facts; though they might have had great rewards if they could have done it; the Roman emperors being then perſecutors of Chriſtianity, and for three hundred years after Chriſt. And Julian the emperor, afterwards turned apoſtate, who had been initiated in the ſacra of Chriſtianity, yet could not he detect any of the facts.

(4.) And it was a particular providence for the further evidence of Chriſtianity, that all the civil governments in the world were againſt it for the firſt three hundred years, leſt it might be ſaid, (as it is ridiculouſly in your Amintor) that the awe of the civil government might hinder thoſe who could make the detection.

Now, Sir, to apply all that we have ſaid, I deſire you would compare theſe evidences I have brought for Chriſtianity, with thoſe that are pleaded for any other religion.

There are but four in the world, viz. Chriſtianity, Judaiſm, Heatheniſm, and Mahometaniſm.

(1.) Chriſ-

(1.) Chriſtianity was the firſt; for from the firſt promiſe of Chriſt made to Adam during the patriarchal and legal diſpenſations, all was Chriſtianity in type, as I have ſhewed.

And as to Moſes and the law, the Jews can give no evidence for that, which will not equally eſtabliſh the truth of Chriſt and the Goſpel. Nor can they diſprove the facts of Chriſt by any topic, which will not likewiſe diſprove all thoſe of Moſes and the Prophets. So that they are hedged in on every ſide: they muſt either renounce Moſes, or acknowledge Chriſt.

Moſes and the law have the firſt five evidences, but they have not the ſixth and the ſeventh, which are the ſtrongeſt.

This is as to Judaiſm before Chriſt came; but ſince, as it now ſtands in oppoſition to Chriſtianity, in favour of any future Meſſiah, it has none of the evidences at all. On the contrary, their own prophecies and types make againſt them; for their prophecies are fulfilled, and their types are ceaſed, and cannot belong to any other Meſſiah who ſhould come hereafter. They ſtand now more naked than the Heathens or the Mahometans.

(2.) Next for Heatheniſm, ſome of the facts recorded of their gods have the firſt and ſecond evidences, and ſome the third, but not one of them the fourth, or any of the other evidences.

But

But truly and properly ſpeaking, and if we will take the opinion of the Heathens themſelves, they were no facts at all, but mythological fables, invented to expreſs ſome moral virtues or vices, or the hiſtory of nature, and power of the elements, &c. As likewiſe to turn great part of the hiſtory of the Old Teſtament into fable, and make it their own, for they diſdained to borrow from the Jews. They made gods of men, and the moſt vicious too: inſomuch that ſome of their wiſe men thought it a corruption of youth to read the hiſtory of their gods, whom they repreſented as notorious liars, thieves, adulterers, &c. though they had ſome mythology hid under all that.

And as men were their gods, ſo they made the firſt man to be father of the gods, and called him Saturn, not begot by any man, but the ſon of Cœlus and Veſta; that is, of heaven and earth. And his maiming his father with a ſteel ſcythe, was to ſhew how heaven itſelf is impaired by time, whom they painted with wings and a ſcythe mowing down all things. And Saturn eating up his own children, was only to expreſs how time devours all its own productions: and his being depoſed by Jupiter his ſon, ſhews, that time, which wears away all other things, is worn away itſelf at laſt.

Several of the heathen authors have given us the

the mythology of their gods, with which I will not detain you.

They expreſſed every thing, and worſhipped every thing under the name of a god, as the god of ſleep, of muſic, of eloquence, of hunting, drinking, love, war, &c. They had above thirty thouſand of them; and in what they told of them, and as they deſcribed them, they often traced the ſacred ſtory.

Ovid begins his Metamorphoſes with a perfect poetical verſion of the beginning of Geneſis: *Ante Mare et Tellus.*—Then goes on with the hiſtory of the creation; the formation of man out of the duſt of the earth, and being made after the image of God, and to have dominion over the inferior creatures. Then he tells of the general corruption, and the giants before the flood, when the earth was filled with violence; for which all mankind, with the beaſts and the fowl, were deſtroyed by the univerſal deluge, except only Deucalion and Pyrrha his wife, who were ſaved in a boat, which landed them on the top of Mount Parnaſſus; and that from theſe two the whole earth was re-peopled. I think it will be needleſs to detain the reader with an application of this to the hiſtory of the creation ſet down by Moſes, of the flood, and the ark wherein Noah was ſaved, and the earth re-peopled by him, &c.

And

And Noah was plainly intended likewiſe in their god Janus, with his two faces, one old, looking backward to the old world that was deſtroyed; the other young, looking forward to the new world that was to ſpring from him.

So that even their turning the ſacred hiſtory into fable, is a confirmation of it. And there can be no compariſon betwixt the truths of the facts ſo atteſted, as I have ſhewed, and the fables that were made from them.

(3.) Laſtly, as to the Mahometan religion, it wants all the evidences we have mentioned, for there was no miracle ſaid to be done by Mahomet, publicly and in the face of the world, but that only of conquering with the ſword. Who ſaw his Meſra, or Journey from Mecca to Jeruſalem, and thence to heaven in one night, and back in bed with his wife in the morning? Who was preſent and heard the converſation the moon had with him in his cave? It is not ſaid there was any witneſs.—And the Alcoran, c. vi. excuſes his not working any miracles to prove his miſſion. They ſay that Moſes and Chriſt came to ſhew the clemency and goodneſs of God, to which miracles were neceſſary: but that Mahomet came to ſhew the power of God, to which no miracle was needful but that of the ſword.

(4.) And his Alcoran is a rhapſody of ſtuff, without

without head or tail, one would think wrote by a mad man, with ridiculous titles, as the chapter of the Cow, of the Spider, &c.

And their legends are much more ſenſeleſs than thoſe of the Papiſts; as of an angel, the diſtance betwixt whoſe two hands is ſeventy thouſand days journey. Of a cow's head with horns which have forty thouſand knots, and forty days journey betwixt each knot: and others which have ſeventy mouths, and every mouth ſeventy tongues, and each tongues praiſe God ſeventy times a day, in ſeventy different idioms. And the wax candles before the throne of God, which are fifty years journey from one end to the other. The Alcoran ſays, the earth was created in two days, and is ſupported by an ox, which ſtands under it, upon a white ſtone, with his head to the eaſt, and his tail to the weſt, having forty horns, and as great a diſtance betwixt every horn as a man could walk in a thouſand years time.

Then their deſcription of heaven is a full enjoyment of wine, women, and other like groſs ſenſual pleaſures.

(2.) When you compare this with our Holy Scriptures, you will need no argument to make you ſee the difference. The Heathen orators have admired the ſublime of the ſtyle of our Scriptures; no writing in the world comes near

it,

it, even with all the diſadvantage of our tranſlation, which being obliged to be literal, muſt loſe much of the beauty of it. The plainneſs and ſuccinctneſs of the hiſtorical part, the melody of the Pſalms, the inſtruction of the Proverbs, the majeſty of the Prophets, and, above all, that eaſy ſweetneſs in the New Teſtament, where the glory of heaven is ſet forth in a grave and moving expreſſion, which yet reaches not the height of the ſubject; not like the flights of rhetoric, which ſet out ſmall matters in great words. But the Holy Scriptures touch the heart, raiſe expectation, confirm our hope, ſtrengthen our faith, give peace of conſcience, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt, which is inexpreſſible. And which you will experience when you once come to believe; you will then bring forth theſe fruits of the Spirit, when you receive the word with pure affection, as we pray in our Litany.

(3.) But, Sir, if there is truth in the Alcoran, then the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God; for the Alcoran ſays ſo, and that it was ſent to confirm them, even the Scriptures both of the Old and New Teſtament; and it expreſsly owns our Jeſus to be the Meſſiah. At the end of the fourth chapter it has theſe words: "The Meſſiah, Jeſus, the ſon of Mary, is a prophet, and an angel of God, his Word and his

his Spirit, which he ſent to Mary." But it gives him not the name of Son of God, for this wiſe reaſon, chap. vi. "How ſhall God have a ſon, who hath no wives?" Yet it owns Jeſus to be born of a pure virgin, without a man, by the operation of the Spirit of God. And in the ſame chapter this Mahomet acknowledges his own ignorance, and ſays, "I told you not that I had in my power all the treaſures of God, neither that I had knowledge of the future and paſt, nor do affirm that I am an angel, I only act what hath been inſpired into me; is the blind like him that ſeeth clearly?" And after ſays, "I am not your tutor, every thing hath its time, you ſhall hereafter underſtand the truth."

This is putting off, and bidding them expect ſome other after Mahomet. But our Jeſus ſaid, he was our tutor and teacher, and that there was none to come after him. Mahomet ſaid he was no angel, but that Jeſus was an angel of God. But when God bringeth Jeſus into the world, he ſaith, "Let all the angels of God worſhip "him," Heb. i. 6. And he made him Lord of all the angels. Mahomet knew not what was paſt or to come; but our Jeſus knew all things, and what was in the heart of every man, John ii. 24, 25. which none can do, but God only, 1 Kings viii. 39. and foretold things to come to the end of the world. Mahomet had not all the trea-

ſures of God: but in Jeſus are hid "all the "treaſures of wiſdom and knowledge. For in "him dwelleth all the fulneſs of the Godhead "bodily," Col. ii. 3, 9.

Again, Mahomet never called himſelf the Meſſiah, or the Word, or Spirit of God, yet all theſe appellations he gives to our Jeſus.

There were prophecies of Jeſus which we have ſeen: were there any of Mahomet?—None; except of the "falſe Chriſts and falſe "Prophets," which Jeſus told ſhould come after him, and bid us beware of them, for that they ſhould deceive many.

(4.) De. But if Mahomet gave thus the preference to Chriſt in every thing, and ſaid that his Alcoran was only a confirmation of the Goſpel: how came he to ſet it up againſt the Goſpel, and to reckon the Chriſtians among the unbelievers?

Chr. No otherwiſe than as other heretics did, who called themſelves the only true Chriſtians, and invented new interpretations of the Scriptures. The Socinians now charge whole Chriſtianity with apoſtacy, idolatry, and polytheiſm: and the Alcoran is but a ſyſtem of the old Arianiſm, ill digeſted, and worſe put together, with a mixture of ſome Heatheniſm and Judaiſm; for Mahomet's father was a Heathen, his mother a Jeweſs, and his tutor was Sergius the

the Monk, a Neſtorian; which ſect was a branch of Arianiſm: theſe crudely mixed made up the farrago of the Alcoran; but the prevailing part was Arianiſm; and where that ſpread itſelf in the Eaſt, there Mahometaniſm ſucceeded, and ſprung out of it, to let all Chriſtians ſee the horror of that hereſy! And our Socinians, now among us, who call themſelves Unitarians, are much more Mahometans than Chriſtians. For except ſome perſonal things as to Mahomet, they agree almoſt wholly in his doctrine; and as ſuch addreſſed themſelves to the Morocco ambaſſador here in the reign of King Charles II. as you may ſee in the Preface to my Dialogues againſt the Socinians, printed in the year 1708. Nor do they ſpeak more honourably of Chriſt and the Holy Scriptures than the Alcoran does: and there is no error concerning Chriſt in the Alcoran but what was broached before by the heretics of Chriſtianity; as that Chriſt did not ſuffer really but in appearance only, or that ſome other was crucified in his ſtead, but he taken up into heaven, as the Alcoran ſpeaks.

So that in ſtrictneſs, I ſhould not have reckoned Mahometaniſm as one of the four religions in the world, but as one of the hereſies of Chriſtianity. But becauſe of its great name, and its having ſpread ſo far in the world, by the conqueſts of Mahomet and his followers, and that

it is vulgarly underſtood to be a diſtinct religion by itſelf, therefore I have conſidered it as ſuch.

And as to your concern in the matter, you ſee plainly, that the Alcoran comes in atteſtation and confirmation of the facts of Chriſt, and of the Holy Scriptures.

De. I am not come yet ſo far as to enter into the diſputes of the ſeveral ſects of Chriſtianity, but as to the fact of Chriſt and of the Scriptures in general, Mahometaniſm I ſee does rather confirm than oppoſe it.

Chr. What then do you think of Judaiſm, as it now ſtands in oppoſition to Chriſtianity?

De. Not only as without any evidence, the time propheſied of for the coming of the Meſſiah being long ſince paſt: but all their former evidences turn directly againſt them, and againſt any Meſſiah who ever hereafter ſhould come. As that the ſcepter ſhould not depart from Judah; that he ſhould come into the ſecond temple; that the ſacrifices ſhould ceaſe ſoon after his death; that David ſhould never want a ſon to ſit upon his throne; that they ſhould be many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a ſacrifice, &c. which they do not ſuppoſe ever will be the caſe after their Meſſiah is come. So that they are witneſſes againſt themſelves.

Chr.

CHR. And what do you think of the ſtories of the Heathen gods?

DE. I believe them no more than all the ſtories in Ovid's Metamorphoſes. Nor did the wiſer Heathens believe them, only ſuch ſilly people as ſuck in all the Popiſh legends without examining.

And to tell you the truth, I thought the ſame of all your ſtories in the Bible; but I will take time to examine thoſe proofs you have given me.

For we Deiſts do not diſpute againſt Chriſtianity, in behalf of any other religion of the Jews, or Heathens, or Mahometans, all which pretend to revelation; but we are againſt all revelation; and go only upon bare nature, and what our own reaſon dictates to us.

(1.) CHR. What nature dictates, it dictates to all, at leaſt to the moſt and the generality of mankind; and if we meaſure by this, then it will appear a natural notion, that there is neceſſity of a revelation in religion: and herein you have all the world againſt you from the very beginning. And will you plead nature againſt all theſe?

DE. The notion came down from one to another, from the beginning, we know not how.

CHR. Then it was either nature from the beginning, or elſe it was from revelation at the beginning;

ginning; whence the notion has deſcended through all poſterities to this day.

(2.) And there wants no reaſon for this: for when man had fallen and his reaſon was corrupted (as we feel it upon us to this day, as ſenſibly as the diſeaſes and infirmities of the body) was it not highly reaſonable that God ſhould give us a law and directions how to ſerve and worſhip him? Sacrifices do not ſeem to be any natural invention: for why ſhould taking away the life of my fellow-creature be acceptable to God, or a worſhip of him? It would rather ſeem an offence againſt him. But as types of the great and only propitiatory ſacrifice of Chriſt to come, and to keep up our faith in that, the inſtitution given with the revelation of it appears moſt rational. And that it was neceſſary, the great defection ſhews, not only of the Heathens, but of the Jews themſelves, who, though they retained the inſtitution, yet, in a great meaſure, loſt the true meaning and ſignification of it; and are now to be brought back to it, by reminding them of the inſtitution and the reaſon of it.

Plato in his Alcibiad. ii. de Precat. has the ſame reaſoning, and concludes, that we cannot know of ourſelves what petitions will be pleaſing to God, or what worſhip to give him: but that it is neceſſary a lawgiver ſhould be ſent from heaven to inſtruct us; and ſuch a one he did expect;

expect; and "O how greatly do I deſire to ſee that man?" ſays he, and "who he is?" The primitive tradition of the expected Meſſiah had no doubt come to him, as to many others of the Heathens, from the Jews, and likely from the peruſal of their Scriptures.

For Plato goes further, and ſays, (de Leg. l. 4.) that this lawgiver muſt be more than man; for he obſerves, that every nature is governed by another nature that is ſuperior to it, as birds and beaſts by man, who is of a diſtinct and ſuperior nature. So he infers, that this lawgiver, who was to teach man what man could not know by his own nature, muſt be of a nature that is ſuperior to man, that is, of a divine nature.

Nay, he gives as lively a deſcription of the perſon, qualifications, life, and death of this divine man, as if he had copied the liiid. of Iſaiah: for he ſays, (de Repub. 1, 2.) that this juſt perſon muſt be poor and void of all recommendations but that of virtue alone; that a wicked world would not bear his inſtructions and reproof, and therefore, within three or four years after he began to preach, he ſhould be perſecuted, impriſoned, ſcourged, and at laſt put to death; his word is Ἀναχινδυλευθήσεται, that is, cut in pieces, as they cut their ſacrifices.

De. Theſe are remarkable paſſages as you

apply them; and Plato was three hundred years before Chriſt.

But I incline to think that theſe notions came rather from ſuch tradition as you ſpeak of, than from nature; and I can ſee nothing of nature in ſacrifices, they look more like inſtitution, come that how it will.

(3.) CHR. It is ſtrange that all the nations in the world ſhould be carried away from what you call nature; unleſs you will take refuge among the Hottentots at the Cape of Good Hope, hardly diſtinguiſhable from beaſts, to ſhew us what nature left to itſelf would do! and leave us all the wiſe and polite world on the ſide of revelation, either real or pretended; and of opinion that mankind could not be without it: and my buſineſs now with you has been to diſtinguiſh the real from the pretended.

(4.) DE. By the account you have given, there is but one religion in the world, nor ever was: for the Jewiſh was but Chriſtianity in type, though in time greatly corrupted: and the Heathen was a greater corruption, and founded the fables of their gods upon the facts of Scripture: and the Mahometan you ſay is but a hereſy of Chriſtianity. So that all is Chriſtianity ſtill.

CHR. It is true God gave but one revelation to the world, which was that of Chriſt: and as that was corrupted, new revelations were pretended.

tended. But God has guarded his revelations with ſuch evidences, as it was not in the power of men or devils to counterfeit or contrive any thing like them. Some bear reſemblance in one or two features, in the firſt two or three evidences that I have produced; but as none reach the fourth, ſo they are all quite deſtitute of the leaſt pretence to the remaining four. So that when you look upon the face of divine revelation, and take it altogether, it is impoſſible to miſtake it for any of thoſe deluſions which the devil has ſet up in imitation of it. And they are made to confirm it, becauſe all the reſemblance they have to truth, is that wherein they are any ways like it, but when compared with it, they ſhew, as an ill drawn picture, half man half beaſt, in preſence of the beautiful original.

(5.) De. It is ſtrange, that if the caſe be thus plain as you have made it, the whole world is not immediately convinced.

Chr. If the ſeed be never ſo good, yet if it be ſown upon ſtones or among thorns, it will bring forth nothing. There are hearts of ſtone, and others ſo filled with the love of riches, with the cares and pleaſures of this life, that they will not ſee, they have not a mind to know any thing which they think would diſturb them in their enjoyments, or leſſen their opinion of them, for that would be taking away ſo much of their

pleaſure; therefore it is no eaſy matter to perſuade men to place their happineſs in future expectations, which is the import of the Goſpel. And in preſſing this, and bidding the worldly-minded abandon their beloved vices, and telling the fatal conſequences of them, we muſt expect to meet not only with their ſcorn and contempt, but their utmoſt rage and impatience, to get rid of us, as ſo many enemies of their luſts and pleaſures. This is the croſs which our Saviour prepared all his diſciples to bear, who were to fight againſt fleſh and blood, and all the allurements of the world; and it is a greater miracle that they have had ſo many followers in this, than that they have gained to themſelves ſo many enemies. The world is a ſtrong man, and till a ſtronger than he come (that is, the full perſuaſion of the future ſtate) he will keep poſſeſſion. And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. But we are told alſo that this faith is the gift of God; for all the evidence in the world will not reach the heart, unleſs it be prepared (like the good ground) to receive the doctrine that is taught. Till then prejudice will create obſtinacy, which will harden the heart like a rock, and cry, *Non perſuadebis, etiamſi perſuaſeris!* "I will not be perſuaded, though I ſhould be perſuaded!"

You muſt conſider under this head, too, the many

many that have not yet heard of the Goſpel: and of thoſe that have, the far greater number who have not the capacity or opportunity to examine all the evidences of Chriſtianity, but take things upon truſt, juſt as they are taught. And how many others are careleſs, and will not be at the pains, though they want not capacity to enquire into the truth? All theſe claſſes will include the greateſt part of mankind. The ignorant, the careleſs, the vicious, and ſo the obſtinate, the ambitious, and the covetous, whoſe minds the god of this world hath blinded.

But yet in the midſt of all this darkneſs, God hath not left himſelf without witneſs, which will be apparent to every diligent and ſober enquirer that is willing and prepared to receive the truth.

(6.) Good Sir, let me aſk you, though you are of no religion, as you ſay, but what you call natural; yet would you not think me very brutal, if I ſhould deny that ever there was ſuch a man as Alexander, or Cæſar, or that they did ſuch things? If I ſhould deny all hiſtory, or that Homer, or Virgil, Demoſthenes, or Cicero, ever wrote ſuch books? Would you not think me perfectly obſtinate, ſeized with a ſpirit of contradiction, and not fit for human converſation?

And yet theſe things are of no conſequence to

me, it is not a farthing as to my intereſt, whether they are true or falſe.

Will you then think yourſelf a reaſonable man, if, in matters of the greateſt importance, even your eternal ſtate, you will not believe thoſe facts which have a thouſand times more certain and indiſputable evidence? Were there any prophecies of Cæſar and Pompey? Were there any types of them, or public inſtitutions appointed by a law, to prefigure the great things that they ſhould do? Any perſons who went before them, to bear a reſemblance of theſe things, and bid us expect that great event? Was there a general expectation in the world of their coming, before or at the time when they came? And of what conſequence was their coming to the world, or to after ages? No more than a robbery committed a thouſand years ago!

Were the Greek and Roman hiſtories wrote by the perſons who did the facts, or by eye-witneſſes? And for the greater certainty were thoſe hiſtories made the ſtanding law of the country? Or were they any more than our Holinſhead and Stow, &c.?

Muſt we believe theſe, on pain of not being thought reaſonable men? And are we then unreaſonable and credulous, if we believe the facts of the Holy Bible! which was the ſtanding law of the people to whom it was given, and wrote

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or dictated by thoſe who did the facts, with public inſtitutions appointed by them as a perpetual law to all their generations; and which, if the facts had been falſe, could never have paſſed at the time when the facts were ſaid to be done: nor for the ſame reaſon, if that book had been wrote afterwards; becauſe theſe inſtitutions (as circumciſion, the paſſover, baptiſm, &c.) were as notorious facts as any; and that book ſaying they commenced from the time that the facts were done, muſt be found to be falſe, whenever it was trumpt up in after ages, by no ſuch inſtitutions being then known. Not like the feaſts, games, &c. in memory of the Heathen gods, which were appointed long after thoſe facts were ſaid to be done: and the like inſtitutions may be appointed to-morrow in memory of any falſhood ſaid to be done a thouſand years ago; and ſo is no proof at all. And though a legend, or book of ſtories of things ſaid to be done many years paſt, may be palmed upon people, yet a book of ſtatutes cannot, by which their cauſes are tried every day.

Are there ſuch prophecies extant in any profane hiſtory ſo long before the facts there recorded, as there are in the Holy Scriptures of the coming of the Meſſiah?

Were there any types or forerunners of the Heathen Gods, or Mahomet?

Is there the like evidence of the truth and ſincerity of the Greek and Roman hiſtorians, as of the penmen of the Holy Scriptures?

Would theſe hiſtorians have given their lives for the truth of all they wrote?

Did they tell ſuch facts only, wherein it was impoſſible for themſelves to be impoſed upon, or that they ſhould impoſe upon others? Nothing but what themſelves had ſeen and heard, and they alſo to whom they ſpoke?

Did they expect nothing but perſecution and death for what they related? And were they bidden to bare it patiently without reſiſtance? Was this the caſe of the diſciples of Mahomet, who were required to fight and conquer with the ſword?

Did any religion ever overcome by ſuffering, but the Chriſtian only?

And did any exhibit the future ſtate, and preach the contempt of this world like the Chriſtian?

De. That is the reaſon it has prevailed ſo little. And yet, conſidering this, it is ſtrange it has prevailed ſo much.

(7.) But there is one thing yet behind, wherein I would be glad to have your opinion, becauſe I find your Divines differ about it; and that is, how we ſhall know to diſtinguiſh betwixt true and falſe miracles.

And this is neceſſary to the ſubject we are upon.

upon. For the force of the facts you allege ends all in this, that ſuch miraculous facts are a ſufficient atteſtation of ſuch perſons being ſent of God; and conſequently, that we are to believe the doctrine which they taught.

You know we Deiſts deny any ſuch thing as miracles, but reduce all to nature; yet I confeſs, if I had ſeen ſuch miracles as are recorded of Moſes and of Chriſt, it would have convinced me. And for the truth of them we muſt refer to the evidences you have given. But in the mean time, if there is no rule whereby to diſtinguiſh betwixt true and falſe miracles, there is an end of all the pains you have taken. For if the devil can work ſuch things, as appear miracles to me, I am as much perſuaded as if they were true miracles, and wrought by God. And ſo men may be deceived in truſting to miracles.

The common notion of a miracle is what exceeds the power of nature. To which we ſay, that we know not the utmoſt of the power of nature, and conſequently cannot tell what exceeds it. Nor do you pretend to know the utmoſt of the power of ſpirits, whether good or evil, and how then can you tell what exceeds their power?

I doubt not but you would have thought thoſe to be true miracles which the magicians are

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ſaid to have wrought in Egypt, but that Moſes is ſaid to have wrought miracles that were ſuperior to them.

Chr. Therefore if two perſons contend for the ſuperiority, as here God and the Devil did, the beſt iſſue can be is to ſee them wreſtle together, and then we ſhall ſoon know which is the ſtrongeſt. This was the caſe of Moſes and the magicians, of Chriſt and the Devil. There was a ſtruggle, and Satan was plainly overcome.

I confeſs I know not the power of ſpirits, nor how they work upon bodies. And by the ſame reaſon that a ſpirit can lift a ſtraw, he may a mountain, and the whole earth, for aught I know; and may do many things which would appear true miracles to me, and ſo might deceive me. And all I have to truſt to in this caſe is the reſtraining power of God, that he will not permit the devil ſo to do. And were it not for this, I doubt not but the devil could take away my life in an inſtant, or inflict terrible diſeaſes upon me, as upon Job.

And I think this conſideration is the ſtrongeſt motive in the world to keep us in a conſtant dependence upon God, that we may live in the midſt of ſuch powerful enemies as we can by no means reſiſt of ourſelves, and are in their power every

every minute, when God ſhall withdraw his protection from us.

And it is in their power likewiſe to work ſigns and wonders to deceive us, if God permit.—And herein the great power and goodneſs of God is manifeſt, that he has never yet permitted the devil to work miracles in oppoſition to any whom he ſent, except where the remedy was at hand, and to ſhew his power the more, as in the caſe of Moſes and the magicians, &c.

And this is further evident, becauſe God has, at other times, and upon other occaſions, ſuffered the devil to exert his power, as to make fire deſcend upon Job's cattle, &c. But here was no cauſe of religion concerned, nor any truth of God in debate.

De. But your Chriſt has foretold, Matt. xxiv. 24, that falſe Chriſts and falſe prophets ſhall ariſe, who ſhall ſhew great ſigns and wonders, to deceive, if poſſible, the very elect. And it is ſaid, 2 Theſſ. ii. 9, that there ſhall be a wicked one, whoſe coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and ſigns, and lying wonders; and it is ſuppoſed, Deut. xiii. 1, &c. that a falſe prophet may give a ſign or a wonder, to draw men after falſe gods. Here then is ſign againſt ſign, and wonder againſt wonder, and which of theſe ſhall we believe?

Chr.

CHR. The firſt no doubt. For God cannot contradict himſelf, nor will ſhew ſigns and wonders in oppoſition to that law which he has eſtabliſhed by ſo many ſigns and wonders. Therefore, in ſuch a caſe, we muſt conclude, that God has permitted the devil to exert his power, as againſt Moſes and Chriſt, for the trial of our faith, and to ſhew the ſuperior power of God more eminently, in overcoming all the power of the enemy.

But, as I ſaid before, we have a more ſure word, that is, proof, than even theſe miracles exhibited to our outward ſenſes, which is the word of prophecy. Let, then, any falſe Chriſt who ſhall pretend to come hereafter, ſhew ſuch a book as our Bible, which has been ſo long in the world (the moſt ancient book now extant) teſtifying of him, foretelling the time, and all other circumſtances of his coming, with his ſufferings and death, and all theſe prophecies exactly fulfilled in him. And till he can do this, he cannot have that evidence which our Chriſt has, and he muſt be a falſe Chriſt to me, and all the ſigns that he can ſhew, will be but lying wonders to any that is truly eſtabliſhed in the Chriſtian faith.

But it may be a trial too ſtrong for thoſe careleſs ones who will not be at the pains to enquire into the grounds of their religion, but take

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it upon truſt, as they do the faſhions, and mind not to frame their lives according to it, but are immerſed in the world, and the pleaſures of it.

(8.) And it will be a juſt judgment upon theſe, that they who ſhut their eyes againſt all the clear evidences of the Goſpel, ſhould be given up to believe a lye. And the reaſon is given 2 Theſſ. ii. 12, becauſe they "had plea-"ſure in unrighteouſneſs." They loved darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds were evil.

So that I muſt repeat what I ſaid before, that there is a preparation of the heart (as of the ground) to receive the truth. And where the doctrine does not pleaſe, no evidence, how clear ſoever, will be received. God cannot enter till mammon be diſpoſſeſſed. We cannot ſerve theſe two maſters. He who has a clear ſight of heaven, cannot value the dull pleaſures of this life; and it is impoſſible that he who is drowned in ſenſe can reliſh ſpiritual things. The love of this world is enmity againſt God. The firſt ſin was a temptation of ſenſe; and the reparation is to open our eyes to the enjoyment of God. Vice clouds this eye, and makes it blind to the only true and eternal pleaſure. It is fooliſhneſs to ſuch a one.

This,

This, this Sir, is the *remora* that keeps men from Chriſtianity. It is not want of evidence, but it is want of conſideration. I would not ſay this to you till I had firſt gone through all the topics of reaſon with you, that you might not call it cant. But this is the truth. As David ſays, "To him that ordereth his converſation "aright, will I ſhew the ſalvation of God." And our Saviour ſays, "If any man do the will "of God, he ſhall know of the doctrine, whe-"ther it be of God, or whether I ſpeak of my-"ſelf." And "No man can come unto me, "except the Father draw him."

This was the reaſon why St. John the Baptiſt was ſent as a forerunner to prepare the way for Chriſt, by preaching of repentance, to fit men for receiving the Goſpel.

And they who repented of their ſins upon his preaching, did gladly embrace the doctrine of Chriſt. But they who would not forſake their ſins remained obdurate, though otherwiſe men of ſenſe and learning. As our Saviour told the Prieſts and Elders, Matt. xxi. 31. "John came "unto you in the way of righteouſneſs, and ye "believed him not; but the publicans and the "harlots believed him. And ye, when ye had "ſeen it, repented not afterwards, that ye might "believe him."

And

And when Chriſt ſought to prepare them for his doctrine, by telling them, that they could not ſerve God and mammon, it is ſaid, Luke xvi. 14. "That when the Phariſees, who were covetous, heard theſe things, they derided him." But he inſtructed them in the next verſe, (if they would have received it) that "what is highly eſteemed amongſt men, is abomination in the ſight of God." And enforced this with the example of the Rich Man and Lazarus. And ſaid, chap. xvii. 25, "That it was eaſier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." And chap. xiv. 33, "That whoſoever he be that forſaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my diſciple." Now take this in the largeſt ſenſe, that he who is not ready and willing to forſake all, as if he hated them, as Chriſt ſaid, verſe 26, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother," &c. (that is, when they come in competition with any command of Chriſt) and "take not his croſs and follow me, he cannot be my diſciple." How few diſciples would he have had in this age! Would all his miracles perſuade ſome to this! The world is too hard for heaven with moſt men!

Here is the cauſe of infidelity. The love of the world, the luſt of the fleſh, the luſt of the eyes,

eyes, and the pride of life, darken the heart, and, like ſhutters, keep out the light of heaven; till they are removed, the light cannot enter. The ſpirit of purity and holineſs will not deſcend into an heart full of all uncleanneſs. If we would invite this gueſt, we muſt ſweep the houſe and make it clean.

But this too is of God; for he only can make a clean heart, and renew a right ſpirit within us. But he has promiſed to give this wiſdom to thoſe who aſk it, and lead a godly life. Therefore aſk, and you ſhall have, ſeek, and you ſhall find, knock, and it ſhall be opened unto you. But do it ardently and inceſſantly, as he that ſtriveth for his ſoul. For God is gracious and merciful, long-ſuffering, and of great goodneſs: and thoſe who come to him in ſincerity, he will in no wiſe caſt out. Therefore pray in faith, nothing doubting; and what you pray for, (according to his will) believe that you receive it, and you ſhall receive it.

To his grace I commend you.

(9.) And with the fulneſs of the Gentiles, O! that it would pleaſe God to take the veil off the heart of the Jews, and let them ſee that they have been deceived by many falſe Meſſiahs, ſince Chriſtt came; ſo none whom they expect hereafter, can anſwer the prophecies of the Meſſiah, (ſome of which I have named) and there-

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fore no ſuch can be the Meſſiah who is prophe-
fied of in their own Scriptures.

And let them ſee and conſider how that fatal curſe they imprecated upon themſelves, "His "blood be upon us and on our children," has cleaved unto them, beyond all their former ſins, and even repeated idolatry, from which (to ſhew that is not the cauſe of their preſent diſperſion) they have kept themſelves free ever ſince; and for which their longeſt captivity was but ſeventy years, and then prophets were ſent to them to comfort them, and aſſure them of a reſtoration: but now they have been about ſeventeen hundred years diſperſed over all the earth, without any prophet, or proſpect of their deliverance; that the whole world might take notice of this before unparalleled judgment not known to any nation that ever yet was upon the face of the earth! So puniſhed, and ſo preſerved for judgment, and I hope, at laſt, for a more wonderful mercy!— "For, if the caſting away of them be the re- "conciling of the world, what ſhall the re- "ceiving of them be, but life from the dead? "For God hath concluded all in unbelief, that "he might have mercy upon all. O the depth "of the riches both of the wiſdom and know- "ledge of God! How unſearchable are his "judgments, and his ways paſt finding out!

"For

" For of him, and through him, and to him,
" are all things. To whom be glory for ever.
" Amen."

FINIS.

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